

PUTTING SKILLS INTO PRACTICE: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT FROM THE STUDENT EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE AND POST-
COLLEGE PROFESSION

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Dedication

This research is dedicated my family. To my mom and sisters for always believing in me. To my late grandmother for instilling confidence and determination. And to my loving wife and three amazing children, thank you for your unwavering support, understanding and love throughout this journey. I am truly blessed to have you in my life. God makes all things possible.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was two-fold: (1) to investigate if the leadership skills learned during their time as student employees in recreation are being used after they have left the UHM within their current work setting, and (2) contribute to the growing knowledge of the direct benefits of campus recreation on campus recreation student employees. The development of transferable leadership skills through on-campus student-employment to the professional working environment is an important process. Research has indicated that students who work on campus may acquire transferable skills, personal skills, enhanced employability, and an increase in self-confidence that supported leadership opportunities. This study sought to utilize the transformative learning framework. A qualitative research design coupled with a questionnaire was employed in which 37 participants who were student employees at UHM were surveyed. From the 37, five participants were randomly selected for more in-depth interviews and probes. Data were analyzed through triangulation in which surveys, interviews, and the researcher own field notes were used. Results found four major themes along with sub-themes. The four themes were: (1) A positive reflection on the student employment experience; (2) Transferrable skills were developed for workforce; (3) Value in the campus recreation student employment; and (4) Reflecting on one's own leadership development. Recommendations for future research are mentioned.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	iv
List of Figures	vii
List of Abbreviations	viii
Chapter I - Introduction	1
Leadership	1
Student Employment.....	4
Rationale for study	8
The Importance of Soft Skills	8
Researcher and the Student Employment Experience	10
Theoretical Rationale	12
Research Questions	14
Key Definitions	15
Chapter II - Review of Literature.....	17
Transformative Learning Theory	17
Valuing Student Employment.....	20
Student Development.....	28
Chapter III - Method	35
Research Design.....	35
Positionality as a Researcher	37
Participants/Sampling	38
Data Collection	42

Data Analysis	44
Implications in Data Analysis	46
Chapter IV - Results.....	49
Opportunities for Leadership	49
Theme #1: A Positive Reflection on the Student Employment Experience	50
Theme #2: Transferrable Skills Were Developed for Workforce	57
Theme #3: Value in Campus Recreation Student Employment	64
Theme #4: Reflecting on One’s Own Leadership Development	68
Discussion of Findings.....	71
Chapter V – Summary, Future Recommendations, and Conclusion	75
Summary	75
Future Recommendations	76
Conclusion	78
References	79
Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter	88
Appendix B: Recruitment Letter.....	89
Appendix C: Online Research Participation Consent Form	90
Appendix D: Online Survey Questions.....	93
Appendix E: Interview Research Participant Consent Form	96
Appendix F: Research/Interview Questions	99
Appendix F.1: Research/Interview Supplement Questions	100

List of Figures

Figures

Figure 1: Employment Opportunities for Campus Recreation Student Employees

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations

BYU ES: *Brigham Young University Employment Services*

HIDOE: *Hawaii Department of Education*

IHE: *Institutions of Higher Education*

NIRSA: *National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association*

UHM: *University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa*

Chapter I - Introduction

“Leadership development is greatly enhanced when you understand how important relationships are in leadership” (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2013, p. 7). We build relationships with others social-emotionally, academically, personal interaction, through clubs and organizations, and work. Relationship building can be purposeful and intentional, much like leadership development. Whether or not these are purposeful or intentional, developing leaders at any level of an organization can be a daunting task. Whether you believe leaders are born or are on the other end of the spectrum where leaders are created, each individual has the potential to lead. There are a number of questions that remain unanswered with regard to leadership development and how leadership skills are being utilized upon graduation. Moreover, there is still ambiguity about leadership styles and how these styles influence leadership development during a student’s matriculation and upon graduating.

Leadership

The study of leadership has produced a number of different definitions of the term dating back to the start of the 20th century (Komives et al., 2013; Rost, 1991). Eben Mumford (1906-1907) defined leadership as the “preeminence of one or a few individuals in a group in the process of control of societal phenomena” (Bass, 1981, p. 7). Early definitions such as Mumford’s describe leadership as one person controlling while the rest follow. However, contemporary definitions describe leadership as relational and based on mutual goals toward some action or change (Komives et al., 2013). Consequently, most current definitions propose some level of interaction between leaders and their subordinates whom work together to reach a goal or action. This interaction between leader and follower is often based on some type of influence whether the interaction is through mentorship, supervision or delegation of

responsibilities found in the area of student employment. Gardner (1990) defines leadership as the process of persuasion or example by which a leader or leadership influences others to follow the intentions held by the leader or shared between the leader and his or her followers.

Leadership may also be about group processes, personality traits, power relationships, or influence (Bass, 1990). The following leadership styles are just a few that offer describe some understanding to the various approaches.

Authentic Leadership Theory. Authentic leaders act with deep personal values in order to build credibility and garner the respect and trust from others (Avoilo, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004). Leaders promote diverse viewpoints and build collaborative relationships with their followers. They also have a willingness to serve others through leadership while also empowering the people they lead to make a difference (Avoilo et al., 2004).

Servant Leadership Theory. In Servant Leadership, leaders view themselves as servants first, and begin with the intrinsic feeling to want to serve others (Spears, 2002). By focusing on the needs of others within a group or organization, the servant, then, transforms into a leader (Komives et al., 2013). The end goal is not to be necessarily become a leader but rather to serve others to make a difference.

Situational Leadership Theory. The Situational Leadership style requires leaders to have a rational understanding of the situation and an appropriate response (McCleskey, 2014). Leaders, therefore, should vary their methods or behaviors based on the context of the situation. The situation determines who will emerge as the leader-the leader being the result of the situation (Komives et al., 2013).

Shared Leadership Theory. Leadership is distributed among different individuals in a group or setting instead of just one person. Shared leadership creates an evolving state where team members collectively lead each other (Avolio, Wulumbwa, & Weber, 2009), toward a desired goal or outcome. This style focuses on the whole system rather than the individual person and the accomplishment of goals are determined by relationships with others in the group rather than just one person.

Transformational Leadership Theory. Transformational Leaders offer a purpose that goes beyond the short-term goals, focusing on higher fundamental needs (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Transformational leadership is a style which focuses on relationships and how these relationships are organized around a shared purpose and in ways that transform, motivate, and enrich the actions of others (Simola, Barling, & Turner, 2012).

Transactional Leadership Theory. In Transactional Leadership, leaders give followers something they want in exchange for something the leader wants (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). This reciprocity are based on contingent reward and management by exception, either active where the leader takes corrective actions before the behavior creates difficulties, or passive where the leaders wait until the behavior has created problems (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

These styles presented are just a few of the different leadership theories that students are exposed to in a higher education institution. Each leadership style influences leadership potential in others by offering unique perspectives on how to lead and can be used in various situations and contexts. The current world commands that diverse individuals work flexibly and respectfully with one another (Komives et al., 2013). Komives et al. (2013) describe three basic principles involved in leadership development (p.7):

Knowing. Leaders must know – themselves, how change occurs, and how and why others may view things differently.

Being. Leaders must be ethical, principled, authentic, open, caring, and inclusive.

Doing. Leaders must act-in socially responsible ways which are consistently and congruently while continuing to be a participant in a community.

Komives et al. (2013) also contend that developing a personal approach to leadership requires individuals to be intentional and thoughtful while also understanding and accepting that their own assumptions may be different from others.

Given the number of different leadership styles, developing a specific type may be complex. However, exposing these different theories to students can be found in a number of areas within higher education institutions. The focus of this study is less on the style of leadership and more about the skills learned that influence leadership behavior.

Colleges and universities offer a number of leadership opportunities for students across campus. These experiences come in the form of clubs, teams, group projects, and classroom instruction which offer unique leadership opportunities for students to take part in. One specific area where students are constantly exposed to the diverse types of leadership theories is within student employment.

Student Employment

Students working on campus acquire specific skills that emerging leaders possess, regardless of the style of leadership. Part-time working students develop team work, communication, customer care, and other practical skills (Barron & Anastasiadou, 2009). Creating meaningful work experiences for students on campus is a key factor in the overall

strategy designed to enhance student achievement and success (Lederman, 2009) in both the academic and professional fields.

On-campus employment offers a number of benefits to both the student and the institution. Institutions benefit from a relatively inexpensive and skilled labor force, while students earn monetary support for their education and information they can add to their resume (Haavik, 2003). Noel-Levitz (2010) adds that as students earn money, they help meet staffing needs, gain valuable work experience, and offer a vital component of college life. As a result, this on campus student involvement has shown to be a powerful predictor of student satisfaction and retention in higher education (Noel-Levitz, 2010). If enhancing the quality of the undergraduate experience is a goal for higher education institutions, then merging the staff and faculty with students in such a way that prepares these students for life both academically and socially should be considered (Frock, 2015).

On campus employment can be an effective way to engage students in campus life. Jobs can provide a supportive and non-threatening environment where students learn to interface comfortably with the public, understand the value of teamwork, develop time management and computer skills, and build self-esteem as they are recognized for their accomplishments (Noel-Levitz, 2010). As students are exposed to the different opportunities to develop skills from their work experiences, student development and transformative learning takes place. Under transformative learning, critical reflection, understanding oneself, changes in beliefs, and changes in lifestyle begins for the individual which may be reflected in their current field of work. As a result, transformative learning for the student occurs through the development of transferrable skills during student employment.

On-campus employment can be an effective way to engage students in campus life and develop a sense of identity with the institution (Noel-Levitz, Inc., 2010). In fact, the student-employment experience offers much more to the students themselves. “Students who are studying full time are becoming involved in part-time employment as a means of providing income, gaining experience, and developing links with the industry that may be useful in subsequent careers” (Barron & Anastasiadou, 2009, pg. 144). They acquire personal transferrable skills, enhance employability, and increase one’s confidence through student employment. More specifically, Barron and Anastasiadou continue by stating that students who work part-time develop teamwork, communication skills, customer service, and practical skills. These traits are vital to future employment possibilities as well as developing leadership tendencies. Interestingly, campus recreation offers student employees this kind of supportive environment and could be considered a lifeline for campus recreation.

Campus recreation or student recreation is a programming unit that affords students to participate in recreational activities and out-door education events. A big component to campus recreation is student employment. Student employment in campus recreation correlates directly with student leadership as students are relied heavily upon to operate and manage recreational services. At the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, student employees are on the front lines in the operation of student recreation services. There are a number of different leadership opportunities and roles for students in campus recreation employment. Students work as lifeguards, intramural supervisors, fitness leaders, outdoor adventure guides, member service associates, facility managers, graduate assistants, recreational class instructors and intramural officials (Chelladurai, 2006). Similarly, student employees play a critical role in campus recreation as they oversee and ensure safety for participants, provide customer service, facilitate programs, lead adventure

activities, teach fitness classes, and officiating sports leagues (McFadden & Carr, 2015).

Embedded within these different job roles are higher leadership positions as student managers and graduate assistants. These upper management positions are involved with direct supervision of student subordinates, ensuring that specific tasks and responsibilities are completed. Full-time staff and faculty serve as mentors to the student employees. The benefits of mentoring undergraduate student employees include assistance with decision-making in such areas as resource allocation, staff development, and goal setting (Frock, 2015).

The National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) is a national organization which comprises and supports leaders in collegiate recreation. As college and university students develop into future leaders, NIRSA associates support their learning and growth through the development of skills such as leadership, teamwork, dedication, and respect exercised by inclusive competition, fitness, informal recreation, facilities management, and outdoor education (<https://www.nirsa.net>, 2017). Leaders in collegiate recreation play an important role in exploring and championing the effect of intramural, club sports, and fitness opportunities through participation as students' leadership develop. The participants who engaged in this current study were employed with the Student Recreation Services Unit of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, a NIRSA institutional member. Acknowledging the role NIRSA plays in student development is important in establishing the relationship and future implications with the study presented because of NIRSA's mission as a leader in higher education to advocate the advancement of recreation, sport, and wellness through educational and developmental opportunities (NIRSA, 2017).

Rationale for study

Changes in the landscape of higher education have prompted leaders of co-curricular programs to re-evaluate what programs have to offer, training models, and value to the student experience (NIRSA, 2014). “Higher level of involvement of students in the on-campus work environment has created new challenges for higher education administrators and educators” (McFadden & Carr, 2015, p. 67). Administrators are expected to provide a meaningful environment for their student workers. Today, it is imperative for institutions to provide opportunities for student leaders, student employees, and participants that foster experiences and competencies so that they are better prepared and are more successful as they enter the workforce. Preparing graduates with work readiness has been seen as a major component in higher education institutions (Daniels & Brooker, 2014). However, current environmental and institutional factors such as an increase in enrollment, the indifference of front-line teaching staff, and the way institutions measure and reward good teaching make the task of developing graduate skills a daunting task (Green, Hammer, & Star, 2009). Yet, it is imperative that part of their education and workforce development involve skills that they may have already learned such as personal interaction with others, communication and work initiative also known as soft skills.

The Importance of Soft Skills

Employers are looking for graduates with the necessary soft skills to be successful in the workforce. “Soft skills are the abilities required in the workplace for professional success” (Rao, 2012, p.50). Soft skills include the graduate’s ability to work with others, think outside the box, communicate effectively, and being open to criticism and change. Rao (2012) adds that soft skills are a collection of several skills and abilities correlated to perform such tasks as

communicating with others, problem-solving, and decision-making. In 2013, a study conducted by Jennifer Pritchard for the Seattle Job Institute (SJI) indicated that soft skills are often a better predictor of career success. Pritchard (2013) found that the local area employers look for individuals who have are able to be reliable, maintain professionalism, communicate, and work in teams. Research has shown the value of soft skills in the workplace and the increased focus by higher education institutions to ensure that students develop such skills.

Contrary to the expectations of today's employers, Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) are committed to providing learning environments that encourage the attainment of academic degrees in a reasonable time. University funding are being allocated to establish or support highly enrolled academic programs, increase pay for faculty and staff, and go towards repair and maintenance projects on campus. As budgets tighten and funding decreases, appropriation of resources supporting campus recreation are often the first to be cut while campus recreational professionals across the nation continuously have to justify their roles in higher education to maintain financial support (Weese, 1997).

Over the last twenty years, research in the recreational sports field has centered on establishing the importance of recreational programs as a vital component for student involvement and co-curricular learning experiences for participants (Hackett, 2007). Still Hackett (2007) states that additional research is warranted to examine how recreational sports employment benefits student employees.

With IHE's willingness to support programs like recreation, appropriation of the majority of the funding goes toward student-employment pay, with little or none focused on student-employment development. In fact, while IHE offer resources related to student development for campus recreation professionals, there is limited emphasis on specific trainings that campus

recreation professionals can utilize to encourage development of their student staff (Tooperzer, Anderson, & Barcelona, 2011). Developing students to become leaders is often a mission of universities and although there is evidence that links participation in recreational sports to a variety of leadership skills (Astin, 1993), there is limited data on how recreation employees develop leadership skills over time. With the limitation on information regarding the efficiency and efficacy of obtaining leadership skills particularly within a University student recreation program, it is imperative that research attempts to validate the importance of offering continued student employment to not only enhance the university experience, but to provide the necessary long term job related knowledge, skills and dispositions to propel them into a competitive workforce. This research intends to take a candid assessment on the role campus recreation has had in developing the appropriate transferrable and leadership skills of former student employees.

Researcher and the Student Employment Experience

As a former product of student employment for campus recreation, I was exposed to a number of different responsibilities and tasks. Starting out as a student official, I learned to organize and manage university recreational games that were both familiar and unfamiliar to me. While I needed to learn those games that I was unfamiliar with, the job itself provided opportunities to learn and experience firsthand all the necessary tasks involved in operating games for the university. The officiating itself required patience, clarity, focus and even passion; even more so particularly when calls were made that became contentious. As a campus recreation service associate, I worked in the fitness center and gym facilities. I handled the day to day operations of monitoring athletic facilities often making sure that participants, usually student-peers, followed the policies of our unit. I was tasked to make sure that the facilities were

clean and safe as well monitoring who could and could not use the facilities. This meant turning people away if they did not have the proper attire or identification. My supervisors recognized the job that I was doing and eventually promoted me to student manager where I developed the necessary skills to lead other student employees. I was given the responsibility to supervise approximately twenty students-employees on a nightly basis whose duties varied between monitoring facilities and officiating games. Working in different levels of campus recreation employment taught me valuable skills that I was able to use when I left the university. The experiences have positively impacted my career as an educational leader serving as a school counselor and educational specialist in the Department of Education in Hawai‘i (HIDOE). During my student employee experiences, I’ve learned to problem-solve, communicate effectively, and become a contributing member within a team. Similarly, the value in teamwork as well as the importance of mutual respect has influenced my ability to further be efficient and effective in my current position. These skills were enforced with many opportunities to respond during my time as a student employee in the recreation unit at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM).

As interim director, I see the same value and learning opportunities in the daily activities in recreation today as I did twenty-five years ago, as a student employee. Student-employees are tasked to communicate, educate, problem-solve, and make decisions based on the interactions they have with recreational participants. Each episode of such experiences transforms his or her skill level to lead. These skills are learned informally through their daily responsibilities and tasks. There are times when “teachable moments” occur. These usually occur when supervisors follow-up with the recreation employees to review instances where mistakes or crisis occur; albeit real life experiences. Usually occurring informally or at random, these opportunities afford

student-employees to learn to see and approach things differently and better themselves to avoid making similar mistakes. All of these learned experiences enhance their leadership skills and they take it with them as they graduate or leave the university and find meaningful work. The question becomes whether or not these learned skills (soft skills included) are being implemented today, after they have left the university. For me, as a professional in this unit, I can say, that the leadership skills I learned so long ago as a student, I still utilize today in the many interactions and collaborations I have with my supervisors, employees, peers, and other students.

Theoretical Rationale

Transformative learning. The impetus to change or grow from one's experiences can be described as one of transformation. Mezirow (2009) suggested that the practice of transformative learning or teaching for change is based on the idea that "students are challenged to assess their value system and worldview and are subsequently changed by the experience" (Quinnan, 1997, p. 42). "The individual experience, the primary medium of transformative learning, consists of what each learner brings (prior experience) and also what he or she experiences within the 'classroom' itself" (Mezirow, 2009, p. 5). In this context, student recreation employment is seen as the "classroom" where authentic learning experiences occur. Learning, then becomes reflective, and if done critically, is seen to rest on the development of mature cognition (Merriam, 2004).

A major component of transformative learning theory is the use of critical reflection. Critical reflection is the engagement in dialogue with oneself and with others. "Dialogue is the essential medium through which transformation is promoted and developed (Mezirow, 2009, p. 9). Mezirow (2009) further contends that dialogue becomes the vehicle where critical reflection is put into action, where experience is then reflected upon, beliefs and assumptions are

questioned, and ultimately, habits of mind are ultimately transformed. Transformative learning can be effectively used to promote student development if students are provided with different working experiences and situations to learn from and identify the role these experiences play as their thoughts, habits, and behaviors begin to transform.

Student development theory. Relative to transformative theory is the study of student development. There is a call for educational leaders to adopt interdisciplinary and integrative approaches to leadership education (Owen, 2012). It has become important that leaders in higher education take an active role in the development of the student leader. To better prepare students for their professional lives, student development in higher education has become an important goal for educational leaders. In turn, campus recreation professionals are responsible for aiding the student employees in developing transferrable skills that will benefit them throughout their careers (Toperzer et al., 2011). Student development encompasses the physical, emotional, social, intellectual, behavioral, and spiritual components of a student's growth. Students working in campus recreation are challenged to develop skills and to grow because of the day-to-day responsibilities and tasks they take on and are required to fulfill. They are responsible for instruction, maintenance, at-risk management, and administration of recreational programs and activities. Some of these student-employees take on managerial roles in charge of supervising and directing other employees and participants.

While research in the field of recreational sports continues to grow and become more diverse, research has been focused on participants and the benefits of involvement in recreational programs (Hackett, 2007). Research on the role of student employees still remains somewhat limited. Exploration on whether the skills learned by campus recreation employees are being transferred to the workforce is even less. Consequently, for this research the experiences of the

participants will be recorded in order to obtain a better understanding about the value of their student employment experience in campus recreation. In turn, the results will supplement the growing literature on student development through campus recreation employment. The study will offer a unique perspective by focusing on former student employees as they assess their own skills development and how the skills transfer into their current working environment.

The study would also shed light to the current conditions of student development in campus recreation at UHM by enabling campus recreational professionals to focus on student development and the development of transferrable skills. Formal evaluations can be implemented to assess the needs and how best to address them for campus recreation student employees. In addition, an evaluation can also lead to support and funding by IHEs. Providing concrete data from evaluations and assessments helps validate the continued existence of recreation programs and services (Tingle, Cooney, Asbury, & Tate, 2013).

To this end, the purpose of this study was two-fold: (1) to investigate if the leadership skills learned during their time as student employees in recreation are being used after they have left the UHM within their current work setting, and (2) contribute to the growing knowledge of the direct benefits of campus recreation on campus recreation student employees.

Research Questions

The key research questions are:

1. What transferrable skills were learned or developed through the campus recreation student employment experience?
2. What was the impact of being a student employee in campus recreation?

Key Definitions

1. *Campus recreation*: An umbrella term representing students who participate in recreation experiences broadly (Dugan, Torrez, & Turman, 2014). Campus recreation includes informal recreation, outdoor education, leisure classes, intramural sports, health and fitness classes, aquatics and club sports.
2. *Career*: A field for or pursuit of consecutive progressive achievement especially in public, professional, or business life (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Online).
3. *Soft-skills*: The abilities required in the workplace for professional success. Mostly related to personality, attitude, and behavior, soft skills are a collection of several skills and abilities related to the execution of certain tasks including communicating, managing time, negotiating, writing, listening, problem-solving, decision making and teamwork (Rao, 2012).
4. *Student development*: Through the use of theories and practices, student development encompasses change and growth in the aspects of the physical, emotional, psychosocial, social, and intellectual traits of the student.
5. *Student employment*: Student employment is defined as having a full or part-time job while still attending college as a student. Student employment usually entails working on a campus, usually the school the student is attending.
6. *Transferrable skills*: Transferable skills are the skills you acquire and transfer to future employment settings. Common examples include interpersonal, communication, leadership and organizational skills.

7. *Transformative learning*: The practice of transformative learning or teaching for change is based on the idea that students are challenged to review their beliefs and worldviews which are changed by experiences (Mezirow, 2009).

As research in the field of recreation sport or campus recreation continues to develop, studies have focused on participants and the benefits they received through their involvement in campus recreation relating to their student development. However, the value of student employees in campus recreation should not go unnoticed. With student staff coming from a wide range of educational backgrounds and majors, one of the most important employment goal is to offer these students the opportunity to develop transferrable skills that will help them when they begin their careers (Hackett, 2007).

This study is intended to build upon the current information on student employees and campus recreation. Using transformative learning as the theoretical lens, the research investigates the development of transferrable skills of former campus recreation student employees at UHM in relation to their respective working environments. Implementing a qualitative research design, surveys and interviews were conducted to gather the necessary information to support this research. The analysis of personal experiences on how each participant viewed their student employment experience will support the value of campus recreation employment. These personal narratives will provide useful data to compliment other statistical data needed to justify the continued support of campus recreation programs.

Chapter II - Review of Literature

There is growing evidence in literature about the value of campus recreation programs in higher education institutions. While much of the focus is on participation in recreation, there has been a slow, emerging literature on the areas of campus recreation student employment (Hackett, 2007; Hall, 2013; Johnson et al., 2012; Tingle, et al., 2013; Toperzer, et al., 2011). Literature on the value of student employment, in general, is more extensive, rather than on a specific type of work or employment (Hall, 2013). Because of the narrow scope of research on campus recreation student employment, the review of literature presented in this study will also focus on several areas including transformative learning, student employment in higher education, and student development.

Transformative Learning Theory

The theoretical lens of this study uses the theory of transformative learning which emphasizes the transformation of individuals through the change or growth from one's own experiences. In transformative learning, individuals are challenged to evaluate their value systems and worldviews and are changed or transformed by these experiences afterward (Mezirow, 2009). Mezirow (2009) explain that transformative theory evolved out of a comprehensive national study in 1978, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, to explain the unprecedented number of women returning to higher education in the United States. From this study, Mezirow (2009, p. 19) identified ten phases of learning in the transformative process:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination
3. A critical assessment of assumptions

4. Recognition of a connection between one's discontent and the process of transformation
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and action
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective

Transformative learning also attempts to offer a model that enables individuals to understand how adults learn in different settings. With this in mind, learning occurs through developmental settings such as student employment.

Scheele (2015) explains Mezirow's two different types of perspectives in transformative learning theory. The first is about meaning schemes, which involves the specific knowledge, beliefs, values, and feelings that come with interpretation. The second involves meaning perspectives, which are the rules that govern one's perception and cognition. Scheele further points out that Mezirow maintained the importance of critical reflexivity when criticizing the premises of which habits are grounded. Scheele (2015) further contends, "the movement to a higher level of mental complexity is an important framework for understand the changes individuals undergo in a transformative learning experience" (p. 8). The experiences offered through the student employment encourages students to think critically about their work and possibly about how this work impacts their thoughts, values, and feelings ultimately, challenging their perceptions and interpretations. This leads to transformative learning.

Transformative learning also undergoes a communicative process. Communication can be considered a key component in most student employment jobs. Communicating effectively with others increases the likelihood of workplace success. Moyer and Sinclair (2016) conducted a study that explains the relationship with communication and learning. In their study, learning was categorized as communicative. Communication developed understanding with others through the integrating of language, conveying purposes, beliefs, feelings and intentions, and resolving conflict (Moyer & Sinclair, 2016). This leads to deeper understanding of others and the self. Moyer & Sinclair (2016) further state, “learning within deep meaning structures that brought about a profound change in the individual’s perception of self and the world, and that resulted in profound change in meaning structures and behavior, was considered transformative” (p. 44).

In 2011, D’Amato and Krasny conducted a qualitative study assessing the experiences of outdoor adventure education participants to identify what the participants found significant about their course as it related to transformative learning. D’Amato and Krasny focused on the transformative theme of individuals experiencing a sense of disorientation or disconnect between constructs and experience. The participants in the study shared about how the elements of the outdoor education courses fostered personal growth, which is often entwined with a commitment to change behaviors, even if such commitments may be difficult to carry out. The study also indicated that the courses integrated other elements of transformative learning including opportunities for self-examination, reflection, interaction with others, and overcoming difficulty. Mezirow (1997) stated that transformative learning is often preceded by a disorienting dilemma followed by critical self-reflection, social interactions, planning for action, and building experience and self-confidence in new roles and relationships as a result of taking action (as

cited by D'Amato & Krasny, 2011). The results of this study indicate the relationship of outdoor education courses and transformative learning. Many roles in student employment provide students with opportunities for transformative learning. Some tasks can be challenging and thus force students to encounter a dilemma. Reflection and growth occur after they have successfully, or unsuccessfully, resolved the quandary.

Valuing Student Employment

The significance of student employment in higher education has been well documented. Colleges and universities alike hire students at low cost, to operate and manage different departments and organizations. Universities employ students in various roles and the rate of student employment has increased steadily (Frock, 2015). According to Fresk & Mullendore (2012), working while going to school is the most common major activity among undergraduates. Students work for a number of reasons. The most common reason is to earn money to cover tuition or other living expenses. Working on campus is also convenient because students are already on site and the hours are flexible usually meeting the needs of the students.

There are two points of an argument regarding the benefits of on-campus employment. On one side, researchers believe that on-campus employment has an adverse effect on the student-employee's academic achievement. However studies also show the benefits of student employment, especially on-campus student employment.

Barron and Anastasiadou (2009) contend that the combination of studying full-time and working part-time, compounded with being in debt can have a detrimental effect on the physical and mental health of the student. MacArthur, Bedenbaugh, and Leonard (1990) discussed that while work is beneficial because it builds character and instills self-discipline, work distracts students from their studies and at times, the jobs the students hold doesn't necessary develop

responsibility. They argue that society has over-valued the importance of working while shortchanging the significance of education.

Researchers also view employment as having the potential to divert student focus away from college-related activities (Riggert, Boyle, Petrosko, Ash, & Rude-Parkins, 2006). Student employees have little time to interact with peers outside of work. However, the assertion that student-employees have less interaction with peers, on-campus employment actually may increase the collaboration with fellow students who work in the same campus department.

When studying students who worked off-campus, academic success of student-employees can be affected by work (Perozzi, Rainey, & Wahlquist, 2003). Ford and Bosworth (1991) state that there are consequences directly related to employment during college. A reduction in study time, missed assignments, and missed classes are the negative consequences that result from work. Perozzi et al. (2003) cites, students also had lower grade point averages (GPAs) when compared to non-working students (Perkins, Pitter, Wijesinghe, Howat, & Whitfield, 1999). Studies showed that working during college have had a detrimental effect on academic success because it was found that students spent more time on the job than focusing on school. As students worked more hours in off-campus jobs, their grades and academic achievements suffered.

The study of on-campus student employment produced different results. Astin (1993) discovered that there is a positive correlation between academic achievement such as degree attainment, cognitive growth, and higher GPAs with students employed on-campus. Students working on campus worked in positions related to their academic fields or areas of interest and were given more opportunities to interact with peers, faculty, staff, and administrators. Students felt more attached to the institution.

On-campus employment and a feeling of connectedness to the campus can be attributed to the concept of involvement (Fresk & Mullendore, 2012). The connection between academic institutions and student employment reflects the positive relationship between the two. A study in 2008 focused on student satisfaction revealing that students, especially those on smaller campuses, felt less engaged as part of the academic community. An article by Freeman, Millard, Brand, and Chapman (2014) focused creating a collaborative educational culture between institutions and students to create student engagement. Their study led to identifying student employment as a catalyst to student engagement. They found that while students are not guaranteed work at the university, students are informed about the wide range of benefits and opportunities, including external employment and enhancing their sense of community on campus. Student involvement on campus has been shown to be a powerful predictor of student satisfaction and the likelihood to persist in college (Noel-Levitz Inc., 2010). In fact, for many students, on campus employment can be an effective way to engage students in campus life thus, increasing their sense of connectedness with the institution.

The study also gave rise to four conditions to support the development of meaningful staff-student collaboration. Freeman et al. (2014) believed that institutional support, making sense of collaboration, ownership and autonomy, and support and encouragement were necessary for others desiring to change the nature of student and staff relationships at their own academic institutions. They also concluded that student employment is financially beneficial because of the relative low costs when compared to investing in the total development of the student. For students, employment on campus gave them opportunities to make change for themselves that is recognized by the institution. For the university, investment in students and staff emphasizes their value as owners of educational enhancement.

While past research has shown the negative component of working while going school, studies have also focused on identifying a positive relationship with work and academic success. Moreover, Watanabe (2005) examined the effects of college student employment on academic achievement. Using a self-administered questionnaire centered on self-reporting their GPAs, number of credit hours enrolled, type of employment, average hours worked per week, job schedule flexibility, and reasons for working. In this quantitative study, Watanabe hypothesized the following: (1) that students with jobs had higher academic achievement than student without jobs; (2) having a job related to one's major had a positive effect on academic achievement; (3) class standing had an effect on academic achievement; and (4) academic achievement was related to the flexibility of the student's work schedule. Collecting quantitative data, her results showed that student employment did not have a consequential effect on academic achievement. In 2006, Brigham Young University's Employment Services (BYU ES) compiled a report (http://www.byu.edu/hr/sites/default/files/effects_of_student_employment.pdf) on the effects of employment on student academic success. The report focused on the effects student employment has with GPA, graduation, and future earnings. Their objective was to summarize some of the general findings of studies looking at the effects of student employment on academic success of college students and to offer suggestions on how university student-employment offices could use these data.

With regards to GPA, BYU ES summarized that the hours worked was a determining factor in the outcome of the student's GPA. They indicated that studies showing that students working more than 20 hours a week had a negative effect on GPA. On the other hand, students working between 15-20 hours a week often report higher GPAs than those who did not work at all. There were some assumptions that working while going to school may affect graduation

rates. This was due to the perception that students need to decrease their credit hours in order to accommodate employment and thus, extending their graduation timeline. While research shows that working more than 20 hours may contribute to the higher possibility that students will drop out before graduation, working 20 hours or less per week did not have an effect on drop-out rates when compared to non-workers. Having a part-time job on campus also increased the student's likelihood in getting an undergraduate degree.

In relation to campus employment having an effect on future earnings, the study further states that campus jobs often include responsibilities with academic components. These components help improve academic experience and develop meaningful skills that are applicable to future work settings. In turn, this results in increased marketability for the student leading to careers with higher earnings.

Their summary on employment and academic success also offers suggestions that most universities, including the UHM follow. One example is the limit of hours a student works in a week. Students at UHM are allowed to work up to a maximum 20 hours per week. Part-time work is not always detrimental if hours worked are manageable (Barron & Anastasiadou, 2009). One recommendation should be noted. BYU Employment Services recommended that student employment offices should provide students with resources to learn time management in order to be successful in both school and work. At UHM, there is a need for more formal training to learn such skills as time management. On-campus worksites take on the added responsibility to teach these skills to student employees.

A study by Gleason (1993) supports the positive correlation between student employment, academic progress and post-college labor success. While conventional wisdom of work-study programs suggest that student employment does not adversely affect academic

performance, Gleason's study focused on the potentially influences student employment has on academics and success in the workplace after college.

The data collected, validated the fact that employment was common among students in college. The data indicated that during a typical college term, 52.3% of the selected students were employed, working an average of 25.9 hours per week. When compared with students who did not work, the grades of student employees did not differ substantially. He points out that even the GPAs of working students were actually slightly higher than nonworking students. Gleason also was careful to indicate the possibilities of other factors, like motivation and energy, may influence a student's grades. The amount of hours worked, the type of classes, and even the quality of the institution can also be contributing factors to academic success.

Another interesting find from Gleason's study was the effect student employment has on post college employment. The information gathered from the study also indicated that student employment exposed them to experiences that may help them in the workplace after graduation. Student employees acquire skills that are used in the post-college workplace. They also developed contacts that could help them find jobs more quickly than other graduates who did not work. He found that students who worked in college were more successful in the labor market in the first couple of years after graduation. These students garnered higher wages than their non-working peers and longer tenures on the job.

Current research shows a positive relationship with student employment, academic success, and post college labor success. While there may be a few implications that working may also have a negative effect on students such as hours worked and the stress of balancing work and school, the benefits of student employment outweigh its drawbacks. Independent variables such as motivation, energy, outside non-academic commitments like family, or even the ability

to handle stress, factor into whether or not student employees achieve success. Still, student employment is positively related to academic success because it promotes a better transitioning to the workplace post college, development of skills needed in the job market, higher wages, and longer employment. Student employment on campus creates meaningful work experiences which is a key element in the overall strategy to foster student achievement and success (Lederman, 2009).

Students working part time learn to develop the capability to work in teams and practice skills. Barron and Anastasiadou (2009) stated that students working part time might acquire personal transferrable skills while also enhancing confidence and employability. On-campus jobs can provide a supportive and non-threatening environment where students learn to interface comfortably with the public, understand the value of teamwork, develop time management skills, and build self-esteem by being recognized for their accomplishments (Noel-Levitz Inc., 2010).

Developing skills needed for the workplace becomes the byproduct of student employment. The combination of work and study is conceptualized as the continuous learning process of skills (Lucas & Lammont, 1998). While the values of technical or cognitive skills continue to remain important, the need for soft skills have been noticed by employers. Soft skills are the abilities needed to insure workplace success (Chamorro-Premuzic, Arteché, Bremner, Greven, & Furnham, 2010; Rao, 2012; Kyllonen, 2013; Miller, 2015). Soft skills include but are not limited to the capacity to work with others, communicate, problem-solve, organization, cross-cultural relations, listening, and management (Nealy, 2005). Individuals with soft skills would be creative, be critical thinkers, and take ownership for their personal development (Hagmann, Almekinders, Bukenya, Guevara, & Halemichael, 2003).

Research in developing soft skills in the academic setting or classroom is well-documented. Nealy (2005) and Green et al. (2009) discuss the role academic staff has in implementing programs to develop transferrable attributes. Hagmann et al. (2003) assert that the classroom is an ideal place where students can practice alternative ways of working with people and gain knowledge about themselves and others.

Consideration must also include the role of student employment, particularly campus recreation employment, as another vehicle for students to gain experience and learn from. Hackett (2007) argued that campus recreation employment “is intended to be a participatory, team oriented, developmental learning experience with students gaining first-hand knowledge of critical workplace skills such as customer service, time management, communication, collaboration, and leadership” (p. 70).

College students come with many skills and experiences but many have not worked with the public or developed the social skills necessary to be successful in the workplace (Noel-Levitz, 2010). Working in the recreational setting offers students meaningful employment experiences because transferrable skills are taught and students feel more involved or connected to the institution by offering students to interact with peers, faculty, and staff on campus (Fresk & Mullendore, 2012; Hackett, 2007).

A study conducted by Hall (2013) looked at the influence of campus recreation employment and student learning. Her data gave rise to several themes. Hall discusses the importance of working with people, emerging leadership skills, and gaining communication skills. One of the responses from her study focused on the value of working with others and developing leadership. Hall (2013) refers to a facility manager with this insight:

Rec Sports has helped me learn how to relate to people and become a better leader.

Becoming a leader isn't simply about being put in an authority position but rather getting those people to respect you and enjoy working with you. I think I've been able to become a better delegater (sic) of tasks and have earned the respect of my peers and will try to carry that into the "real world" (p. 139).

Another important theme was how Hall's respondents valued the development of communication skills needed in their respective careers. Students surveyed shared about how their campus recreation employment helped them communicate better with others. They also stated that communication was important to explain policies and rules. They needed to be clear and accurate while also being patient, flexible, and calm while communicating. Other responses to support the value communication in campus recreation employment included building and maintaining relationships and engaging others.

Student Development

Student development is a conceptual and theoretical foundation used to understand and work alongside college students (Walker, 2008) to bring about change, growth, and development. Campus recreation employment also fosters student development as student employees build transferrable skills. Participation in campus recreation programs has positive effects on the overall satisfaction of student life and the college experience (Bryant & Bradley, 1994). Employers highly valued skills such as interpersonal skills, ability to solve problems, communication, technical knowledge, energy level and judgement over grades (Bryant & Bradley, 1994). Campus recreational programs, including employment, continue to have a positive impact in student development.

The student development philosophy believes in the fact that student engagement impacts the growth and enhancement of the total person which guides the daily activities and routines of campus recreation professionals (Tingle, Cooney, Asbury, & Tate, 2013). Tingle et al. (2013) also contend that campus recreational programs help fulfill the missions of higher education by providing challenging and supportive experiences where students can reach their potential. Thus, campus recreation professionals believe one of the most effective ways to provide extracurricular learning is through campus recreation student employment (Pack, Jordan, Turner, & Haines, 2007; Tingle et al., 2013). Campus recreation student employees are given the responsibilities to take on a variety of jobs that require interaction with a number of different peers. As a result, campus recreation employment leads to student leadership development.

Arthur Chickering's Seven Vectors focuses on the overall identity development of college students. Chickering (1969) believes that student development is encouraged by students who undergo the following seven vectors:

- (1) Developing competence: College students develop intellectual competence, physical and manual skills, and interpersonal competence. This involves mastering content, gaining intellectual insight, and building the skills necessary to comprehend and analyze. Students' competence develops as they begin to trust in their abilities, receive feedback to make necessary changes, and implement their learned skills.
- (2) Managing emotions: Students are able to become aware and acknowledge their own emotions and learning to channel them in positive ways.
- (3) Developing autonomy: Students are able to take care of oneself which requires both emotional independence (freedom from the continual need for reassurance) and

instrumental independence (ability to organize activities and problem-solve), and later recognition and acceptance of interdependence (relying on others).

(4) Developing mature interpersonal relationships: Students develop mature relationships by tolerating and appreciating differences and the capacity to be close or intimate with others.

(5) Establishing identity: Identity development occurs as students find out who they are as individuals. They accept their likes and dislikes, have self-esteem and self-acceptance, and understand their sense of self in social, historical, and cultural contexts. They are comfortable with who they are and are open to feedback from others that help encourage self-identity.

(6) Developing purpose: Students develop plans for the future. They become deliberate in the courses they want to take related to their career paths, make choices based on personal interests, and involves consolidating their different goals into a larger, more meaningful purpose.

(7) Developing integrity: Students develop integrity by humanizing their values shifting from literal beliefs to one that is more relative which involves the concern for others, personalizing their values selecting parameters to reflect themselves and suit the conditions of their lives, and developing congruence between personalized values consistent with their behaviors.

These seven vectors represent the major changes a student may go through in student development. Relatedly, student leadership development occurs through peer interaction, like student employment. Colleges and institutions are creating opportunities for service learning, internships, field experiences, and relevant paid employment, which when combined with

academic studies, strengthens learning and encourages personal development (Chickering & Kytle, 1999).

Seemingly, opportunities to develop leadership skills can be found in on-campus student employment. Development of leadership skills and qualities has often been viewed by employers as the most important intangibles found in graduates (Dugan, Torrez, & Turman, 2014). Campus recreation fosters leadership skills by following a hierarchal design in student employment and participation. Student-employees manage and guide other student-employees who in turn, supervise participants taking part in a recreational activity or sport.

A study by Dugan, Torrez, and Turman (2014) examined the correlation between opportunities given for leadership development and campus recreation employment. The authors found that students who participated in different aspects of campus recreation demonstrated higher leadership capacity than many of their peers who did not participate in any form of campus recreation. An interesting find centered around the impact of mentoring relationships on leadership development. The data showed the need to understand if mentors (full-time professionals) are prepared to work and cultivate leadership skills with the students they work with. Ultimately, while campus recreation employment and participation creates opportunities for leadership development, campus professionals should be prepared to understand what this fully entails.

Campus recreation student employment offers a number of positives in terms of student development including developing self-confidence, enhancing communication skills, and utilizing critical thinking. Campus recreation involves the hiring and deployment of many student leaders giving them learning opportunities to enhance their educational experiences and help them prepare for life and work (Weese, 2014). Leadership development of campus

recreation employees is important to ensure that recreational programs meet organizational goals as they deliver high quality services and activities (Tingle et al., 2013). In order to receive learning experiences that are meaningful, campus recreational student employees need to be engaged.

Astin stated in 1984 that “the greater the student’s involvement in college, the greater will be the amount of learning and personal development” (as cited in Hackett, 2007, p. 70). Students employed in campus recreation indicate a higher level of involvement in college. Hackett (2007) maintained that student staff comes from a wide variety of educational backgrounds other than recreation but the one of the main overall education and employment goals is to offer students chances to acquire general transferrable skills that will help them become better prepared for their respective academic or work careers.

Meaningful experiences usually occur when students are committed and have higher satisfaction and loyalty. Job satisfaction is an indicator for retention and skill development. Kellison and James (2011) conducted a study on job satisfaction and found that student employees were happier with their jobs when they had effective supervisors, had good feelings about the organization, maintained good working relationships with peers, and enjoyed the program area or the work itself. Higher job satisfaction among the student employees nurtures a healthier and more efficient working environment and thus, learning is encouraged.

Johnson, Kaiser, and Bell (2012) found that student commitment levels were highest for those that worked in the unit the longest and were supervised by a professional staff member. The role of the supervisor is particular important because the study found that having a strong, working relationship with their supervisor, was ranked most important among the participants of

their study. This is consistent with those findings from Kellison and James (2011) indicating that job satisfaction correlated with students having an effective supervisor.

On-campus recreational student employment offers opportunities for involvement, peer interactions, mentorship, and development of skills. An important factor that encouraged students to stay employed was identified by Johnson, et al. (2012) as the flexible hours campus recreation offered. This finding is important because it allowed flexibility in scheduling which in turn increased job satisfaction.

Since undergraduates play a significant role in the leadership and delivery of campus recreation programs, students begin their professional development as employees in campus recreation (Toperzer, Anderson, & Barcelona, 2011) because it provides a rational pathway for encouraging overall student development. Student development is influenced by the premises of natural maturation of the student and that learning takes place in the university environment (Creamer, 1980). While some of the learning takes place in the classroom, learning can also take place in alternative settings including the workplace (Toperzer et al., 2011). This workplace according to Toperzer et al. (2011) can include campus recreation and campus recreation professionals can help foster learning by helping their student employees obtain transferable skills.

Campus recreational professionals have taken on the responsibilities to develop the overall students and equip them with the necessary transferrable skills. The study by Hall (2013) indicated that because of the experiences working in campus recreation, students reported perceived gains in critical thinking, integrative learning, an appreciation of different outlooks, collaboration of skills, and communication skills. These skills along with the many other

attributes developed in campus recreation employment are skills that students can use in their future workplace.

The role of campus recreational professionals is an important one. Bower, Hums, and Keedy (2005) conducted a study to identify the reasons to mentor students in campus recreation. Their findings produced several themes. Mentors wanted to help students learn and grow by providing leadership in guiding, nurturing, and encouraging students to take the next steps in their lives. Campus recreational professionals also indicated the positive benefits of using a more mentoring style of leadership often encouraging student employees rather than just telling them what should be done. Mentors also discussed the value of professional development for students to participate in where they would learn new skills. Mentors described the outcomes of their relationship such as developing friendships and promoting separation. Separation was noted to be a positive phase for mentors because the students become independent and begin to make their own decisions. From this study, there appeared to be a dual-benefit for both campus recreation professionals and student employees.

Chapter III - Method

In 2014, NIRSA launched a team (Cramp, Croft, Cummings, Fehring, Hall, Hnatusko, & Lawhead) to study how the skills gained through participation and employment in co-curricular experiences helped to prepare students for their careers. They found that students gained employment skills from their working experiences in college and contend that for student affairs to be sustainable, it is essential that leaders and mentors such as supervisors and full-time staff teach students to understand and articulate the skills acquired from student employment and involvement in co-curricular activities, (NIRSA, 2014). The overall goal therefore was to determine if leadership skills learned as student recreation employees during their matriculation in college are being utilized in their current and respective lines of employment. In this regard, this chapter consists of the following sections: research design, participants, data collection, and data analysis.

Research Design

The use of a qualitative research methodology was used in this study. There is great value by using this method. Merriam (2009) reports that “the overall purposes of qualitative research are to achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process (rather than the outcome or product) of meaning-making and describe how people interpret what they experience” thus, justifying the value of conducting a qualitative research method for this study (p.14). Merriam (2009) adds that a qualitative research is an attempt to understand the nature of a setting and what that setting means to the participants while the researcher analyzes the data and convey its meaning to those interested in that setting. The analysis strives for depth of understanding. The use of surveys, interviews, and the graduate’s

own voice in a narrative story will provide insight to the participants' own leadership development and the skills that they put into practice.

This study was conducted through an action research framework using inquiry done by or with insiders to an organization (Herr & Anderson, 2005). More specifically a participatory action research utilizes the knowledge and expertise of the participants to identify their own problems and solutions. With a foundation in participatory action-research design, the plan was to implement a phenomenological approach through narrative inquiry strategy using the methods of on-line surveys and in-person interviews (individual) to gather data for the research. Merriam (2009) explains that the task of research using phenomenology is to illustrate the essence or basic structure of experience. The primary mode of data gathering was through a series of interviews. The use of action-research design is based on an emphasis of logic being transformed. As cited by McNiff (2013) "transformational logics embrace the idea that human living is full of contradictions that need to be understood and lived with rather than resolved, and that experience can provide the grounds for new beginnings (p. 7)".

Herr and Anderson (2005) state that action research studies have potentially important contributions to a field's knowledge base because they contain a local perspective that few traditional researches are able to provide. This study focused on providing a voice for former student employees in recognizing the value of their experiences in campus recreation, how their leadership skills were cultivated during this time, and whether or not these skills are being used today.

As part of the research process and because this study focuses on the human element as test subjects, IRB approval for an exempt study from the UHM was requested and approved in March 2016. A copy of the IRB Approval Letter can be found on Appendix A. The IRB approval

included a recruitment letter to solicit responses (Appendix B), an online consent form which needed to be completed prior to the start of the first level of inquiry (Appendix C), the online survey (Appendix D), a signed consent form to participate in the individual interview (Appendix E), the interview questions (Appendix F), and supplemental interview questions (Appendix F.1).

Positionality as a Researcher

As a former student employee for campus recreation, I have developed the skills that I use in my current profession as Interim Director for Recreation Services at the UHM. From personal experience, this has been a positive transformation from how I led as a student-employee to how I lead today. Thus, my positionality as a researcher turns out to be one of an insider in collaboration with other insiders or former insiders who offered personal insight into their own development as a leader and the skills they learned and implement in their current fields of work. Herr and Anderson (2005) pointed out that “insider researchers often collaborate with other insiders as a way to do research that not only might have greater impact on the setting, but is also more democratic” (p. 36). These collaborations allowed engagement in data-based decision making. Insider in collaboration with other insiders is knowledge-based which allows improved practice and professional or organizational transformation.

As the Interim Director for the unit, being an insider gave me the opportunity to interact with current and former employees and helped me understand the construct of how campus recreation here at the UHM operates. I am able to direct and evaluate the programs and activities offered and operated by student employees. Being an insider, I am able to examine the experiences the students go through and can offer input and guidance based on my personal experiences in similar situations. The relationships built by being an insider have given me the opportunity to survey and interview former employees who may or may not have had similar

experiences in terms of leadership development and skills implementation in their current line of work. Collaborating with former insiders developed a unique perspective on how past student employees viewed their own personal leadership development. Their insight contributed to the building knowledge of what the student employment experience offered, particularly in recreation.

Participants/Sampling

An integral component of this research is the use of purposeful sampling. In purposeful sampling, researchers determine the selection criteria in choosing the people that will be studied. It is based on the assumption that the investigator seeks to discover and understand and thus, selects a sample from which the researcher can learn the most (Merriam, 2009). Patton argued that

“the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling” (as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 77).

This research intentionally sought out former student employees of the campus recreation unit at the UHM. This strategy can be more specifically identified as snowball, chain, or network sampling. Network sampling involves locating a few key participants, in this case, former student recreation employees, who easily met the criteria established for participating in this study. This was meant to gather the rich data regarding the impact campus recreation employment has had in developing, foster, and utilizing their leadership skills including communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, and conflict-resolution.

Participants for this study were identified through the UHM Student Recreation Services student-employment database or UHM Student Employment & Cooperative Education (SECE) website. Because the focus of the research involved, former student workers who are no longer at the institution, solicitation for participants was made through digital and social media. The two formats used were Facebook messenger and electronic mail (email). The description, purpose of the research study, and consent to participate were included in the formal request to take part in the study.

The targeted participants were forty (40) adults (18 years of age and older) who worked as a student-employee in Student Recreation Services as intramural officials, life guards, service associates for informal recreation, instructors, student managers, and graduate assistants at the UHM and are now employed in some type of capacity outside of the university. These former student-employees may or may not have matriculated from the UHM. However, to increase validity and breadth of responses, an additional twenty (20) adults were randomly selected to participate. From the sixty (60) solicitations, five (5) were randomly selected for an individual interview. To be eligible for the interview, each individual selected had to meet the criteria of completing the online survey. Each participant was selected on the following conditions: (1) worked in campus recreation as a student employee; (2) was no longer employed in campus recreation; (3) was no longer enrolled at the UHM; and (4) expected to be working in some capacity in the work force after college.

Five participants were selected to complete one-to-one interviews. Employing the aforementioned criteria, the five interviewees held positions in the workplace will be described as *clients* in this study to maintain anonymity. They include a marketing specialist (*MS*), administrative assistant (*AA*), special education teacher (*SP*), insurance policy adjuster (*IP*), and

recreation director (*RD*). All participants described their campus recreation employment as a positive experience. Each had the opportunity to supervise or lead other student employees and students who participated in various recreation activities and events. A brief description of each participant is offered.

Marketing specialist. MS currently works as a marketing specialist for the tourism development authority in Wilmington, North Carolina and promotes destinations for sporting events in the area. As a former student employee for campus recreation, she was in charge of running outdoor education events often supervising a group of ten students. She would lead or teach a number of land and water activities such as hiking, surfing, paddle boarding and kayaking. In addition, *MS* was responsible for implementing various marketing strategies to promote student recreation services. Marketing was something that was new to her and new to the programming unit. She did not have formal background in marketing but accepted the challenge. She admits that by allowing her the freedom to develop and implement marketing strategies, her creativity flourished. She conducted a number of presentations for student orientations to solicit participation and engaged new and transfer students to participate in the various activities offered by the campus recreation unit. When asked how she managed to be successful in her role, she replied that repetition of job expectations helped her in developing and enhancing her communication and people skills. Doing it over and over again boosted her confidence and knowledge of the subject.

Administrative Assistant. AA is working full-time at a children's hospital in downtown Honolulu. Involved with the educational component of a medical office, she manages the department while also assisting the education director with training faculty members, doctors, and attending doctors from the medical school. While working for campus recreation, she was

employed as an official, service associate, and eventually ended her tenure in campus recreation as a student-manager. While serving in several positions in campus recreation, she felt that her leadership and the development of skills applicable for the workplace occurred most during her time as a student manager. In this role, she was responsible for making sure facilities were maintained, activities were on schedule, and monitored the supervision of other student employees and patrons. Having a managerial role helped her with completing the duties and responsibilities as an administrative assistant.

Special education teacher. *SP* began her student employment as a service associate for campus recreation. Her responsibilities included the opening and closing of facilities and checking patrons coming in and going out of the facility during recreational programming. Like *AA*, *SP* also was eventually promoted to student manager, albeit with some reservations. *SP* admits that she was very shy and wasn't comfortable talking to people. Still, she took a job working in campus recreation which forced her to engage with others, problem-solve, enforce rules, and supervise peers. *SP* contends that the situations she faced during her time as a campus recreation student employee still influences her today, as a special education teacher.

Insurance policy adjuster. *IP* worked his way up the hierarchal leadership chain of campus recreation as a student employee. He was always interested in sports being active in high school and wanted to be involved in sports at the collegiate level. His interest led him to participating in various intramural activities. *IP* found himself working in campus recreation as an intramural official for softball. From there, he began taking shifts as a service associate monitoring facilities and checking identification. His work ethic was rewarded by being promoted manager and finally a graduate assistant for intramural sports. As a graduate assistant, *IP* was responsible intramural programming which included scheduling student staff, scheduling

and implementing games and activities, and supervising over twenty-five student employees. Like the others, he asserts that the lessons learned and the skills developed continue to help him in his role in insurance policy.

Recreation director. RD carried out his undergraduate requirements majoring in Health Physical Education & Recreation (HPER), which is currently Kinesiology & Rehabilitation Sciences (KRS). As an undergraduate, he volunteered working in the campus recreation department and eventually getting student employment. He recalls being given the freedom to administrate different leagues, some of which the department never had, and came up with the rules, schedules, and officiated some of the games. He credits his supervisors for giving him the support and guidance to implement activities he was not familiar with. After graduation, *RD* spent several years employed as a seasonal ranger for the National Park Services and also coordinated the Waikiki Yacht Club junior sailing program. Because of his experiences in different workplaces, he was hired as director of leisure services which is now known as outdoor education.

As documented from this sample of participants, campus recreation employs a wide range of students coming from diverse backgrounds, majors, and focus areas of study. Campus recreation offers opportunities for students to learn from a vast array of experiences as they grow and develop into leaders.

Data Collection

Data were collected through three different modes: anonymous on-line surveys, research literature, and individual interviews as a way of assuring the validity of this research. The first step to the collection of data began with an online survey sent out to the sixty participants. The participants were selected randomly with no predispositions on gender, how long they worked

for the unit, or age. Of the sixty participants, thirty-seven (62%) agreed to take part in the survey and proceeded with the online inquiry. Of this thirty-seven, eighteen (49%) were female and nineteen (51%) were male.

The survey consisted of twenty-five questions. The first ten questions targeted background information such as gender, number of years employed in campus recreation, and current employment. The remaining fifteen questions focused on each respondent's personal analysis of the leadership skills developed and their current use of those skills learned. The survey offered a foundation of which the data gathered assisted in developing the necessary framework for the face-to-face interviews. A copy of the online survey can be found in Appendix D.

Five individuals, three females, and two males, were selected to take part in thematic, phenomenological interviews. The focus of phenomenology is how people experience and draw meaning from these experiences (Pitney & Parker, 2009). This research attempts to describe the essence of experience. The interviews centered on personal insight on their student-employment experiences in relation to leadership development and practice. Questions were open-ended and indirect to solicit reflective and honest answers. Participants were asked about their prior working capacity in campus recreation, their own personal thoughts about the development of leadership skills during this employment experience, their reasoning to whether or not these leadership skills developed were important, and feedback or insight on some of the responses gathered from the online inquiry to further define the role campus employment in recreation plays in the development of leadership skills. Additional follow-up queries were asked to further explain the interviewee's response or gather additional feedback and insight about a specific point made. These follow-up questions aided in further developing a unique and a deeper

reflection for each respondent's answer. This unique reflection offered breadth and personalization to their responses thus, providing personal value to the experiences shared which led to the collection of rich data. A copy of the general interview questions can be found in Appendix F.

Each interview was conducted in an isolated setting, usually an office or classroom where minimal interruptions occurred. One interview was completed via telecom because the individual lived in North Carolina. All other interviews took place in a face-to-face format. Three of the five interviews required follow-up questioning for clarification. Of the three, one was performed via telecom due to a conflict in schedule availability.

Interviews with the participants ranged from thirty to forty minutes. Participants were permitted to pass or skip a question with the possibility of returning to that question. Responses to the questions were kept confidential and were not shared with other participants taking part in the study unless consent was given. Names were also kept confidential to as to not to identify responses to specific individuals. However, consideration was made to allow the participants to offer their names voluntarily in order to validate and personalize their responses.

Data Analysis

Triangulation is a process of cross-validation comparing the information gathered to determine rationale (Oliver-Hoyo & Allen, 2006). Using current literature on the impact student employment has on students, particularly in campus recreation, as a foundation for this research, data from the on-line surveys were collected to gather an initial insight to the role campus recreation employment has had in these former student employees' personal and professional lives. The information from these participants was then used to guide the questions used for the individual interviews. The results of this triangulation of data indicated the positive relationship

student employment in campus recreation has had in the development of transferrable skills to the workforce.

The face-to-face interview was audio-recorded and then transcribed. The verbatim transcription of these recorded interviews provided the best database for evaluation and analysis (Merriam, 2009). Developed in 2014, an on-line software known as Trint (<https://trint.com>) was used to transcribe each interview. Instead of sending the audio to an outside resource where transcriber error could occur, Trint's technology connects audio to computer-generated transcripts so that they are synchronized. The Trint Editor mode allowed for the consumer to edit transcripts quickly. This allowed the audio to be transcribed within minutes as opposed to sending the interviews to an outside source. In addition, by editing the transcripts simultaneously, clarification of words or phrases was done directly whenever the Trint Editor Program was unable to transcribe certain words due to the technology's inability to recognize or if words or phrases were inaudible. This expedited the process of transcribing while also allowing for immediate review.

Member Checking for Reliability. After the transcripts were completed, a copy of the transcription was given back to each corresponding interviewee to insure accuracy and validity of their responses. Only the participant received a copy of his or her own transcription. No other participant was permitted to view another person's transcript. Allowing each participant to view his or her own transcript, he or she would decide whether or not the responses as well as the context of the responses were accurate and true.

Once the interviewee approved the transcript, the document was returned for coding and analysis allowing for the identification of common thematic concepts. These themes included learned experiences, transferrable skills, the value of student employment, and the link between

campus recreation employment with leadership skills usage in their current respective working environments. The results from the coding and analysis of the responses became an integral component of the narrative report in this research.

Implications in Data Analysis

Sampling. Data were collected through convenience and purposeful sampling, focusing on one specific target group, former student employees of campus recreation at the UHM. Purposeful sampling was utilized under this premise, it was based on the assumption that the researcher wants to gain insight from the participants and thus must select a sample from which rich data can be derived from (Merriam, 2009). The construct of any research study is guided by the resources available and the purpose of the study (Emmel, 2013). Researchers are faced with the problem of limited resources and not everyone or everything can be included in a research. A narrow scope of convenience and purposeful sampling was utilized in the study which led to selection bias as the research only focused on a specific group, former student employees of campus recreation. What limited the study further was only thirty-seven out of a possible sixty solicitations responded to the initial interview. Of the thirty-seven, two started the survey but did not complete it. As a result, the scope of the research only presented a shallow or superficial snapshot of the thoughts and feelings of these former student employees. The data from the survey yielded limited results as it only questioned the participants insight based on a 5-point Likert Scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The depth of the data analysis was derived from the five separate, individual interviews. Albeit, a small collection “qualitative samples are invariably small because in collecting rich insight these data will be bulky” (Emmel, 2013, p. 140). Emmel (2013) further explains that

validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from a qualitative study is more about the richness of the information collected rather than the size of the sample measured.

Researcher Bias. Involved in any form of research is the concept of researcher or experimenter bias. Chenail (2011) states that despite its popularity, qualitative interviewing creates some challenges for the researcher. The researcher can pose the greatest threat to trustworthiness in qualitative research if the researcher does not spend quality time on preparation, reflexivity, and staying humble in the process (Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2003). Questions reflect the concerns or curiosities of the researcher who developed them. Norris (1997) explains that “the problem is that while it is easy to label potential sources of bias, it is not possible to construct rules for judging the validity of particular studies or domains of inquiry” (p. 174). Researchers need to think of the social processes that may keep the study honest, fair, while enhancing its quality (Norris, 1997). To reduce bias, Sarniak (2015) states that the goal of minimizing bias is not to make everyone the same but to ensure that questions are thoughtfully prepared and asked in a manner that allows the participants interviewed an opportunity to share their true feelings without misrepresentations.

In order to minimize researcher bias and legitimize the information collected in this study, I acknowledged two dispositions. The first was to accept and understand that bias from the researcher and/or participant will occur naturally. This bias, called social desirability involves respondents answering questions in order to appear favorable to the researcher. Social desirability bias can be widespread throughout a study and lead to misleading research results (Fisher, 1993).

The second was to acknowledge that sponsor-bias can occur. In sponsor-bias, the participants know the sponsor of the research. The participants’ feelings or their relationship with

the researcher, whether favorable or unfavorable, may influence their answers resulting in a misrepresentation of the participant's true feelings or interpretations (Sarniak, 2015).

One way to challenge these biases was to provide well thought out questions for the online survey and the in-person interview. Phrasing questions to show it was okay to answer in a way that is not necessarily desirable, asking their opinions on what others think, and maintaining a neutral stance aided and encouraged the respondents to share their own personal feelings (Sarniak, 2015). "Subjects are able to disengage themselves from the social implications of their responses, leading to larger estimates of normative beliefs and evaluations" (Fisher, 1993). As a result, answers were honest and representative to the feelings of the respondents. These questions can be found in Appendices F and F.1, respectively.

Because of the personal and professional nature regarding the relationship between the interviewed participants and the researcher, it was necessary to state my position as the researcher, and not as a former employer, to the interviewee. Each participant was informed that their responses would have no positive gain or consequence other than to provide meaningful data to support the research question. Each participant was encouraged to be honest and candid in the responses. In doing so, answers would be authentic and purposeful. The goal was to bring insight and reflection to their overall assessment of leadership skills development in their own lives. The end result would be an authentic delivery of the participants' thoughts and feelings. This narrative would define whether or not the leadership skills developed in their recreation employment are being used currently after leaving the UHM.

Chapter IV - Results

As higher education leaders focus on the development of students, the relevance of transferrable skills into the workforce remains an important topic. Universities are taking action in encouraging students to develop attributes that can transfer into the workforce. However, much more needs to be done as current environmental and institutional factors make the task challenging because of the increased in student numbers, the impact on instructor practices, and the lack of concern, whether intentional or not, of the front-line teaching staff (Green, Hammer, & Star, 2009). Student-employees, particularly in campus recreation, can be given those opportunities to gain the skills that can be used in the workforce after college. The potential for skills gained can serve as a vehicle to develop transferrable skills and opportunities for leadership traits.

Opportunities for Leadership

College and university campus recreation programs have routinely employed students to implement a wide variety of programming and patrons (Johnson et al., 2012). Moreover, Tingle, et al. (2013) describes employment on college campuses as a method that allows opportunities to develop leadership through management and mentorship of student employees. Participants were former student employees and worked in a number of different job positions in campus recreation. Figure 1 illustrates the breakdown of job duties by the participants who took part in the study. (Note: the figure below indicates multiple positions the contributors may have held during their campus recreation employment and therefore may have been double counted).

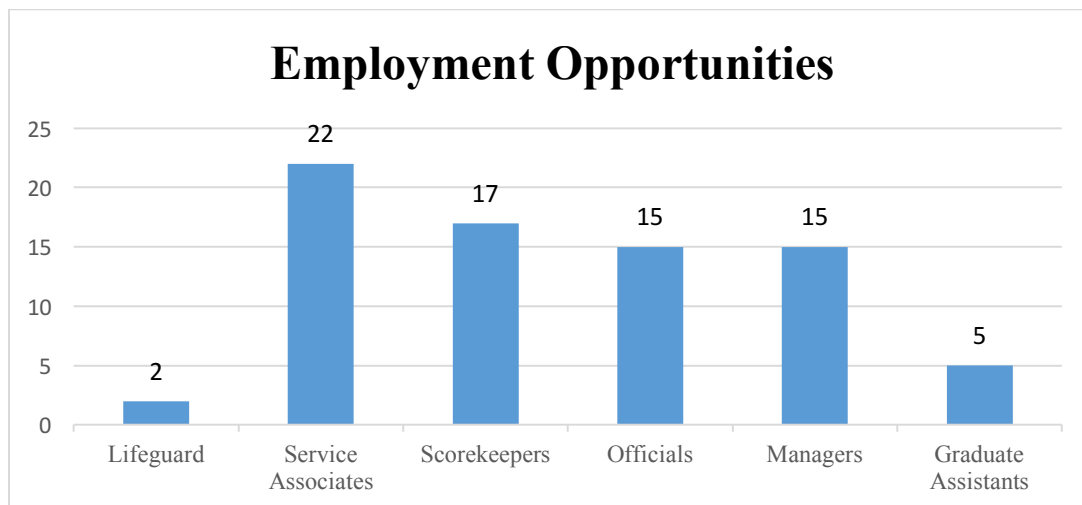


Figure. 1 *Employment Opportunities for Campus Recreation Student Employees*

Opportunities for leadership can serve as a useful tool in ensuring skills learned during their college employment are transferrable to “real-life” workforce skills. Opportunities for leadership serve as the overarching descriptor of findings related to this study. Within the overall context of the findings, four themes emerged that aligned within the context of opportunities for leadership skills. Within these four themes, several sub-themes were also identified through specific questions presented in the online questionnaire and later reviewed in more detail in the one-to-one interviews. To this end, the four themes were:

- (1) A positive reflection on the student employment experience.
- (2) Transferrable skills were developed for workforce.
- (3) Value in the campus recreation student employment.
- (4) Reflecting on one’s own leadership development.

Theme #1: A Positive Reflection on the Student Employment Experience

Hackett (2007) stated that when more students become involved in college activities, the higher the likelihood for increased learning and development of both technical and soft skills.

Student employment is an effective way to become involved in college and serves as a fostering

environment to develop specific skillsets. One of the several assumptions for this study centered on the idea that skills, especially transferrable ones, can be developed through student employment, specifically in campus recreation. The participants selected in the study shared similar, positive perspectives reflecting on their own skill development. Each student entered campus recreation in the early stages of their college years and as their skills developed, so did their opportunities for leadership.

Of the respondents (n=60), an overwhelming 95% thought they developed leadership skills during their time as a student employee at student recreation services, while 5% felt they did not. The 95% who responded favorably believed that they were given opportunities to lead and develop leadership skills in their respective student job capacity. More specifically, statements from the one-to-one interviews (each of the five interviewed) support the notion of skills developing during campus recreation employment.

MS: *“I led and taught students in various classes like surfing lessons, sailing, kayaking. And then in the marketing specialist position, I edited and updated the student recreation services website. I kept up with our social media pages and I created a presentation for new student orientation to showcase student recreation services.”*

“I was in charge of up to ten people at a time, who may have been novices in the activity that they were participating in. I definitely had to lead and guide these people.”

AA: *“As a manager, we would run the different sports every night. We have to set up and make sure all the employees were there and doing their job. We would have to do scheduling. Manage the night and make sure everything is going smooth.”*

SP: *“Sometimes I worked in the gym so we just took care of everything that happened in the gym. I answered questions, checked people in and made sure they had specific*

equipment or attire to enter the gym. Eventually I moved over to intramural sports and started off as a scorekeeper and eventually a referee, specifically for soccer.”

IP: *“I first started out checking ID’s for tennis people walking in when we had open recreation for students. And then throughout my years, I was able to officiate football, basketball, soccer, coed basketball, softball, just the realm. And then as a manager, I was able to supervise a staff of probably anywhere between 25 and 35 students at a time, being able to coordinate schedules and working with coworkers.”*

RD: *“I had the opportunity to work with a lot of the overall spectrum of what the intramural sports department did at the time. So it was good. You know it wasn’t like I was just a referee and I only did that, I helped with the wrestling tournament and I actually, they (directors) gave me the freedom to go ahead and start a soccer league which we never had. And so it gave me the ability to have more of a leadership role.”*

The reflection of how some of their leadership skills developed gave rise to a set of subthemes on how these skills manifested. These sub-themes allow for a more rich and thorough description of the overall theme one. Being placed out of their comfort zone and having skills developed over time were two such subthemes.

Out of the comfort zone. A sub-theme of being employed in campus recreation is the idea that they were “stepping out of their comfort zone”. This experience was specifically identified by several of the interviewees. They reflected on the idea that their skills were enhanced or developed because their scope of responsibilities created experiences that either they were not necessarily familiar with or may not have been exposed to. Examples of stepping out of the comfort zone included dealing with diversity and mentoring student peers. More specifically,

AA, SP and RD shared initially feeling uncomfortable because they stepped into roles that they either did not have experience in or was unsure of what were expected from them.

AA: *“When I started, I didn’t even know anything about sports. I only watched soccer mostly and I never played a sport. So coming into this was such a big change for me and kind of stepping outside of my comfort zone and growing and learning about the different sports and just rules in general.”*

“Self-confidence was a big thing for me. Stepping outside of my comfort zone doing things that I had never done before. Kind of an eye opening and helping me realize that I can do other things with my life and trying new things is not a bad thing. Even if you do mess up, and it’s not the right thing for your, it’s fine because you tried it.”

SP: *“When I first entered college, I was very shy. I didn’t really like talking to people. My parents kind of forced me to get a job so I tried to choose a job where I would have liked the least amount of contact with people. But when I started, I was like forced to talk to people, to check people in and to answer their questions and even their concerns. It was kind of out of my comfort zone so taking that leadership position was very scary.”*

RD: *“Teaching and running other things which would mostly include teaching sailing and running sailing classes allowed me to enhance what I already had in a different capacity. Which was really good. I’d already had time teaching and being in a leadership role. But it allowed me to do it outside of my comfort zone.”*

From not knowing anything about sports to overcoming shyness and to teach or develop activities that were new, three of the interview respondents felt that being employed in campus recreation forced them to “step out of their comfort zone”. Stepping out of your comfort zone can have either positive or negative implications. For these three, being forced into an

uncomfortable position actually had a positive effect as they overcame this uneasiness to fulfill their job duties and thus grow both professionally and personally, as they learned or enhanced a number of skills required to do their job.

Skills developing over time. Another sub-theme emerged the belief that their skills such as communication, decision-making, working in teams, and critical thinking were developed over time. Working in campus recreation for the majority of their college years indicate how committed students were to the unit they worked for. Johnson, et al. (2012) asserted that student employee commitment levels were highest for those who had worked in the department the longest. Higher commitment coupled with length of stay in a unit during student employment lead to the increase chances to develop skills and the overall student. The interviews from the study yielded information their skills grew or were enhanced over the course of their student employment. Some of the skills included being flexible, developing critical reflection, communication, and teamwork. The interviewees were employed as students spanning from two to five years. The longevity of their stay indicated how much they valued what campus recreation offered and in turn how much they have developed.

MS: *“Skills were developed over time. By doing it over and over again and then same with the marketing specialist position, that position didn’t actually exist until a need was recognized for it. And then the leadership component definitely hone in on because I was basically creating what needed to be done.”*

IP: *“I first started out here in 2008. I was a freshman. Kind of just came onto the program. I like playing sports and you know being around that kind of atmosphere and then just in the course of years, I grew from a student attendant checking ID’s all the way to refereeing or officiating games to managing a small staff and then eventually to a*

graduate assistant. There's a lot of good things, a lot of great things that I learned even through mistakes that I've done throughout my time with UH, I was able to just grow as a person.

SP: *"I think my confidence with everything I've done kind of grew with this job. Like I said, just being able to take care of situations and all of that."*

For the interviewed respondents, to learn from mistakes and given the opportunities for flexibility and try new things helped with the development of transferrable skills.

An assumption can be made that student employment offers opportunities to cultivate leadership skills. While the interviews yielded positive reflections about the development of skills, it is interesting to point out that not all shared this sentiment. There were two outliers who did not feel they developed any leadership skills from their student employment experience. The question, then, is why an overwhelming 95% believed they developed these skills. The interviewees were asked to expand on this indication.

MS: *"You know I would say for those who were in the 5%, they just weren't in the right department of student recreation services. There's leadership opportunities anywhere in student rec. It's just a matter of finding where you belong."*

AA: *"Maybe they didn't get a chance to lead."*

SP: *"I think they're just not aware of what leadership skills they developed. I thought the same thing. But coming from when I first started college to now, I've seen how I've actually grown. I feel like they just said that cause they're not aware of what skills they developed but they really did."*

IP: *"Really it's all perspective. It really depends on the person's motive. So, what I've learned is that people that want to do good and you know, want to succeed, work hard*

and they actually put in the time that they need to. Others sometimes they just see it as a paycheck.”

RD was more pragmatic.

“I mean it could’ve been because if they were hired as a scorekeeper. They were hired basically doing just one thing. If you were hired as a lifeguard, unless you kind of moved into maybe a head guard spot, you wouldn’t feel like you really are developing any leadership skills. 5% are student managers, so maybe that’s your area of reflection.”

The overall sentiment was that there are leadership opportunities in campus recreation. Whether it’s in a managerial role or in a service capacity, student employees are given the chance to carry out responsibilities that ultimately has an impact in leadership skill development. Topper et al. (2011) contend that student and leadership development are influenced by the learning that takes place in a college setting and the natural maturation of students. Consequently, learning in a college setting is not isolated to the classroom. Learning, and thus development, can occur in the workforce like campus recreation.

Not developing leadership skills through student employment can be based on the premise that these students were not hired in the right positions or were not given the same opportunities to develop leadership skills. This belief can be attributed as being affected contextual experiences. Opportunities are readily available as noted by some of the interviewed participants. However, how the student perceives these opportunities (context) or how their values and beliefs affect these perceptions impact on whether or not skills are actually learned. For some, student employees who were given opportunities to lead, developed leadership skills. Conversely, others who were not given such opportunities or did not believe they were given those chances, did not develop leadership skills. Riggert et al. (2006) explained the idea of

context in these ways: (1) that the student employment experience for the student only makes sense when employment is viewed in the context of other variables like the individual's characteristics, beliefs, or even length of employment and (2) that the cognitive and physical burdens of a demanding job can affect the physical and intellectual energy needed to meet the demands of higher education. Reflection, whether positive or negative, is affected by the context of which the student employee views the opportunities to develop or enhance leadership and transferrable skills.

Campus recreation employment provided job opportunities where student employees would be given the chance to develop leadership skills. The subthemes of “stepping out of your comfort zone” and skills developing over time” contribute to the positive reflection on their own skill development. Enforcing rules, diffusing situations from escalating when a patron is irate, and being given the responsibilities to supervise peers adds to new experiences, which they may have not been exposed to in college classroom. These results give rise to support the fact that meaningful experiences occurred during student employment. These meaningful experiences occur when students are committed and satisfied with their work, which leads to a higher level of involvement in institutions of higher education (Astin, 1984; Hackett, 2007; Kellison & James, 2011).

Theme #2: Transferrable Skills Were Developed for Workforce

Transferrable skills being developed within student employment and are being utilized in the current workforce was another theme that resulted from the study. Transferrable skills such as prioritizing, organizing, working well with others, time-management, and problem solving were acquired during their employment in campus recreation. These soft skills are the abilities

needed to insure employable success (Chamorro-Premuzic, Arteché, Bremner, Greven, & Furnham, 2010; Kyllonen, 2013; Rao, 2012).

Participants were asked if they acquired transferrable skills from their campus recreation employment. An overwhelming thirty-five or 95% of the thirty-seven strongly agreed or agreed that they in fact gained transferrable skills from their student employment in campus recreation. The remaining two opted to skip the question. In addition, when asked if they currently utilize the skills that they've learned from their campus recreation employment experience in their current jobs, the data indicated, 46% strongly agreed, 37% agreed, and 17% neither agreed nor disagreed. Those who took part in the one-to-one interviews added:

MS connected a specific event during her student employment to what she does now:

“When I was in the marketing specialist position and I created a presentation that would be given at New Student Orientation. That is a moment where I was representing the student recreation services that I knew a lot about and I was essentially selling it to people who didn't know anything about it and that's exactly what I do in my current position. I take one Wilmington destination and I know a lot about it and then I sell it to people who could potentially utilize our services or our product so that's a prime example of how it directly correlates with what I do now.”

She added: *“I would say the public speaking aspect was a huge part that I learned as well as just working with people and that's a huge skill that was developed throughout all my positions in student recreation.”*

AA shared about acquiring the skill of training:

“In my position, I had to train a couple of different people on certain tasks. If you're not able to train somebody else on the task that you're doing then that means you really don't

know well yourself and I feel like I took a lot of training in teaching aspect from SRS into my job now because I just recently had to train somebody in my job that I was doing. In order for her to succeed, I had to teach her well.

SP talked about communication as a transferrable skill:

“When my boss encouraged me to become a student manager, I was very hesitant. I didn’t want to make tough decisions. I didn’t want to communicate with other people but I took the position and I learned how to deal with different people and how to communicate with different people and how to stay calm. Things got tough. So, with my current job, I deal with a lot of children but I also deal with a lot of adults. And they have very strong personalities and we don’t agree all the time but I’ve learned to just communicate and learn their personalities so that I am able to work with them well.

IP discussed the challenges of dealing with difficult people:

“I’m a people person. I deal with a lot of people in my line of work. But at any given time, you had somebody new walking in and you treat everybody fair and equal and give them an opportunity to do the best that they can be. My line of work is to put out fires that a skill that I feel like I definitely learned with my time in student recreation.”

RD credited his supervisors:

“Spending time with my supervisors, Lloyd and Laurie, being able to see how they have things organized and structured gave me an opportunity to maybe expand my thinking skills. My job is basically putting on programs and activities year-round. I think it (his current position as a recreation director) directly translates from those earlier days, the same thing that we’re doing now like putting on water-based activities and hikes, my organizational skills developed.”

Soft skills are also transferrable and include but are not limited to the capacity to work with others, communicate, problem-solve, organization, develop and maintain cross-cultural relations, listening, and management (Nealy, 2005). Several sub-themes come to light throughout the course of the interviews that were identified as transferrable skills. Common among the participants were their views on complex thinking skills, communication, and confidence.

Complex thinking skills. Each interviewee was asked about his/her thoughts on their own development of complex thinking skills.

MS attributed her development by being able to develop guidelines on her own.

“A lot of the things that I did with student recreation services too place off campus or I was developing things like the whole marketing specialist position. It seemed like I was developing what that was supposed to be like. So absolutely it took complex thinking skills. I didn’t have someone standing over me telling me what to do. I was kind of given a task and then able to run with it.”

AA’s complex thinking developed from new learning.

“For me, the complex thinking came from learning the rules of a sport that I never thought of before. You don’t really think about all the little details of all the rules. And I think that’s what I developed a lot is trying to think outside the box and think bigger picture.”

SP developed this skill by finding value in multi-tasking.

“Just being able to take care of different situations all at once so knowing that I have to do it. So many things happened at once and just being able to manage my time, managing everyone else’s time and make sure they are all doing their jobs appropriately.”

While developing complex thinking skills was evident in the interviews, the survey yielded interesting results regarding the development of complex thinking skills. Of those surveyed, 27% felt that working in campus recreation neither agreed nor disagreed that they developed complex thinking skills. The interviewees were asked their thoughts on these results.

AA stated that, “it depended on the person”.

IP suggested, *“I feel like the numbers are a little lower than it should be, I definitely felt like my complex thinking grew, being able to think critically about situations and make accurate and just decisions.”*

Although the 27% of the participants surveyed indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed with the idea that he/she developed complex thinking skills, 73% surveyed believed that they in fact were able to acquire complex thinking skills from their student employment experience. Several factors including the ambiguity of the survey question and whether or not this skill was particularly important could have led to the low percentage of undecided. Nonetheless, for the majority surveyed, developing complex thinking skills remained significant.

Complex-thinking skills acquired by exposure to events that encouraged thinking outside the box and making difficult decisions. Interviewees were succinct in sharing that the development of complex skills was attributed to being given the freedom to be creative, putting time into understanding and learning the position, understanding the diverse population served, and implementing procedures that focused on the safety and well-being of campus recreation participants.

Communication. Communicating includes both talking and listening to others while conversing and this was another sub-theme that echoed throughout the interviews. Eighteen or 51% and fifteen or 43% strongly agreed or agreed, respectively, that working in student

recreation services developed communication skills. The participants interviewed talked about the value of two-way communication to resolve conflict and to share ideas.

MS traced the development of this skills to her campus recreation positions.

“Public speaking was a huge one. When I was leading groups whether it be a hike or a surf lesson, I was definitely the center of attention and I had to instruct them and tell them what to do. The public speaking aspect was a huge part that I leaned.”

SP admits:

“Communication, I think that’s a big one, because, before I would, and sometimes still, like to try to solve the problem within myself before asking people, and as time went on, I think I was able to ask for help or even communicate with different types of people.”

IP shared:

“I feel as a leader you have to be able to listen to problems or situations that are going around you and to be able to have a clear head. You have to be able to get all sides of the story before you make a decision.”

The comments indicated the value of communication whether to instruct, resolve, or make decisions. The use of this particular skill is evident in their current jobs because while the responsibilities differed, the common things shared about the workforce is the value of communicating effectively with others which then leads to better understanding and better relationships. Hall (2013) found that campus recreation employment helped students communicate better with others and was key in engaging others while maintaining relationships.

Communication was further enhanced through the active involvement of teaching peers and communicating with a diverse population on a college campus. Opportunities to resolve

conflict, speaking in front of others, willing to ask for help, and being an active listener allowed for their communication skills to develop.

Confidence. The participants (N=37) who took the online survey indicated equally, 49%, that they either strongly agreed or agreed with this idea that working in campus recreation developed their confidence. 2% could not answer in agreement or disagreement. All five participants interviewed commented that confidence was an essential component to leadership development. Their confidence grew as they became more familiar and more comfortable with requirements of campus recreation. As previously indicated earlier in the analysis, skills developed over time. The longer students stayed employed in campus recreation, the higher the commitment level to the unit. Their commitment was later rewarded with more specialized job duties and managerial roles. AA shared the following,

“I don’t think anybody who works for your is going to trust your or listen to you and actually confide in you things. Because as a leader you need to be confident in what you’re teaching your employees or whoever you’re leading. If you’re not confident then they’re not going to be confident either.”

IP attributed his confidence development from the confidence his supervisors had in him *“to make the right decisions and the right calls on situations that arose.”*

RD: *“I think the experience of putting together a new program in a new league and running the league and seeing it going for years and years, made me feel good about what I did.”*

Self-confidence blossomed as length of employment increased. Familiarity about the requirements of campus recreation grew as full-time professionals placed more trust in the student employees' decision making.

The data from the survey were confirmed by interviews in which the majority of those taking part in this study did develop skills that can be transferred and used in the workforce. While the online survey participants strongly agreed (46%) and agreed (37%) that they currently use those skills in the work force, 17% could not agree or disagree. However, the five individuals interviewed support the positive survey responses as they attest to developing or enhancing specific skills like communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and self-confidence that they currently use today.

Students are offered learning opportunities through campus recreation. The hiring and deployment of many student leaders by campus recreation involves offering opportunities to improve their educational experiences and assist them in preparing for life and work (Weese, 2014). Student employment exposed students to experiences that may help them in the workforce after graduation (Gleason, 1993).

Theme #3: Value in Campus Recreation Student Employment

University campuses employ students at low cost, to operate and manage different departments and organizations. Colleges hire students in various roles and the rate of student employment has increased steadily (Frock, 2015). Working on campus is convenient for students because they are either on site or the hours are flexible. The importance of campus recreation can be identified by the value and meaning it has within a higher education institution. Hall (2013) asserted that campus recreation employment placed value on the importance of working with others, the emergence of leadership skills, and developing communication. Two sub-themes were

identified in the participants' responses during the interviews. Each respondent shared that they indeed had a positive experience in campus recreation student employment and pointed out the value in maintaining relationships.

A positive experience. Campus recreation provides opportunities for students to be involved at a college or university (Henchy, 2011). While involvement included participating in intramural sports or working out in the facility, campus employment in recreation served as another opportunity to get involved with campus recreation. Asked if working in campus recreation contributed to a positive experience in college life, the survey yielded a positive response with 63% strongly agreed and 37% agreed. Those interviewed also confirmed that the experiences had a positive influence on them. For example, RD explained that campus recreation employment offers students a connection to something other than just academics.

RD: *"Outside of the academic area, that you basically have in your classes, it gives you an opportunity to you know, it's a protected opportunity to get involved and experience things, experience the real world without being in the real world."*

MS: *"My learning that was the biggest learning opportunity. Classes are one thing but I was able to apply the experiences in the field."*

AA also shared conflicting views on the value of on-campus employment.

"Working on campus helped me and prepared me to time manage myself and realize like a job has responsibilities and you need to show up and be there when you are expected to. But it is a job but it doesn't really prepare you for as a professional (in terms of) all the aspects of a real job like real life like bills, retirement funds, and healthcare. So, this job was very like a fairytale land. All I had to do was work. I didn't have to worry about

a retirement fund or m benefits going different way paying for all of that. It's just different."

IP: *"I think it does and it really makes you appreciate getting an education you know not everybody wants to do the job that they have and you know the many hours that they have, but through education you can get to where you want to be so it really shows an appreciation for it (campus recreation employment)."*

The responses collected through the interviews share the same sentiment that working in campus recreation provided valuable and positive experiences. The participants discussed about being part of a community outside of academics which afforded an increase awareness of learning outside the classroom, preparation for life away from college, and an appreciation of getting an education and the opportunities that come with it, like student employment. The respondents articulated the importance of having the opportunities to learn about the recreation sports field through the different roles and responsibilities they took on such as teaching a surfing class, officiating a basketball game, and managing recreational facilities and programs.

It is interesting to point out that some of the interviewees discussed student employment as a simulation of the real world. For the participants in this study, campus employment in recreation offered a number of benefits similar to what the workforce has to offer. Student employment encourages time-management, punctuality to be at work on time, and opportunities to enhance both technical and soft skills like managing a budget, developing computer skills, and working in teams. Student employees in campus recreation also operate in a protected environment. Campus recreation professional staff supervise and mentor student employees. Full-time professionals also are ultimately responsible in making sure programs and events are implemented. Unlike most employment outside of the college setting, student employees are

given the flexibility to work in between classes during different parts of the day. Student employees are also protected because there is room to make mistakes and opportunities to learn from them, while the real-life workforce may not offer flexible work hours or be kind to making errors without real consequences like termination from employment. Despite the fact that on campus student employment may not offer all of the experiences required for a particular workforce, former student employees who took part in this study agreed that their experience have been mainly positive.

Creating and maintaining relationships. Another outcome of student campus recreation employment centers on the development of relationships. This was a recurring theme among the participants interviewed. Developing a connection with fellow peers, patrons, and supervisors created a positive impact to their growth. Campus recreational activities encourage significant involvement and interaction by student employees, patrons, faculty, and staff. This interaction and involvement also supported the development of professional and personal relationships.

AA: *“I made all my friends through my job. I kept active because of this job. I created so many memories with this job. I think if I didn’t have this job in college, I wouldn’t have been the person I am today.”*

SP: *“Just being able to work with people. And building those relationships with my coworkers was really important in college and I think, here at the school (her current job) I need to, and I’m learning to build my relationships with coworkers because that’s really important to be successful and have the kids (she teaches) be successful.”*

IP: *“It’s a cornerstone in my life and I spent almost half a decade more than half a decade over here. You know I created great friendships along the way, lasting friendships that I know I can talk to these people any time I need to.”*

While not particularly identified in the survey, the individuals who took part in the interview discussed the value of relationships that resulted from their student employment experience. Developing lasting friendships, working with different people, and enhancing their social skills factored into how and why campus recreation employment was valuable. They maintain that these relationships are an integral part of who they are today and how they currently interact and work with others in the workforce. They have better communication, are more open-minded, and can view multiple perspectives. Student employment, for them, offered a supportive and non-threatening environment where students learn to interface comfortably with the public, understand the value of teamwork, develop time management skills, and build self-esteem by being recognized for their accomplishments (Noel-Levitz Inc., 2010).

Theme #4: Reflecting on One's Own Leadership Development

The term leadership depends on what specific aspect of leadership individuals are interested in (McCleskey, 2014). Recreational sports programs have the important responsibility to provide opportunities for students to develop their leadership attributes (Matthews, 1978). When posed the question if the campus recreation student employment experience helped him or her develop into a better leader in the survey, an overwhelming number strongly agreed (43%) and agreed (49%). A small number (8%) answered neither. The interviewed participants were asked to follow-up on this same question and responded:

AA: *"It (campus recreation student employment) gave me experiences in different situations that I never would have gotten if I didn't work there. If I didn't have those experiences in SRS, I wouldn't have the insight to do my job well now and I wouldn't have the understanding of how everything should work or could work."*

SP: *“As I started working for intramural sports, there came more problems and I had to solve them more and even as a manager. Taking the leadership position was scary. But taking a leadership class in college, I learned that even though I am a very passive person, that there is like a leadership for that. I was told that I’m the motherly type so I wanted to just take care of things and people around me.”*

IP: *“Knowing me, I never feel like I’ve reached my potential.”* IP continued, *“One of the reasons that I appreciated the program (campus recreation) was because it was really student led and being student led you give those students the opportunity to grow within themselves.”*

Student employment in campus recreation offered a number of leadership opportunities to help foster leadership development. These opportunities include instructing an outdoor activity, managing facilities, implementing intramural sports programs, and other managerial roles like supervising a student staff of about twenty. They can give rise to the development leadership skills as well as the potential to lead to a deeper understanding of themselves as they carried out roles and responsibilities in student employment. Below are some final thoughts of how the respondents interviewed felt about the impact student employment in campus recreation has had in their continued leadership development.

MS: *“Student recreation services allowed me to hone in on what exactly I like to do and where I can see myself in the future, in employment. Student rec allowed me to do a lot of different things so I could kind of identify with what I liked and what I didn’t that kind of plan out my future.”*

AA: *“It helped me figure out who I am. I like to work in a team, like to work with people and like to constantly see movement in an organization. We always try to better ourselves.”*

SP: *“You’re always trying to figure out who you are, at this point right now it’s so difficult for myself but being at this (elementary) school, I’ve been able to learn more about myself and I guess identity is still like will be a continuing who am I.”*

IP: *“I feel like my identity is intramural sports. I was kind of known as that guy and still kind of known as that when I walk around they’re like, ‘Hey, you’re the intramural guy.’ I’m a very confident person and it’s because of that and it’s not over cocky it’s because of the time and work that I’ve put in and being able to know all the material, is key to being confident and having the support of your boss and your staff that respect you.”*

RD: *“You know I think that a lot of my identity is just that contacts, the people through the years that I made at UH, I feel confident being able to work here and know my limits which translated to my work here.”*

While the survey results indicated that the majority of former student employees believed that their student employment experience helped them into becoming a better leader, the interviews confirmed that belief by providing concrete examples. Student employment helped them plan for the future, value teamwork in their current work, learning more about oneself, and developing the confidence they need in their respective working fields. The narratives described how leadership comes more directly from the learning experience and taking on responsibilities that would foster leadership behaviors.

Discussion of Findings

Transformative learning was initially identified as the theoretical lens for this study. Transformative learning was developed from the constructs of a grounded theory methodology and included an intensive field study on a diverse group of participants (Mezirow, 2009). However, while the study used transformative learning as a theoretical construct, the study was unable to indicate if transformative learning was actually developed due to the limitations of sampling size, sampling responses, and time. Despite not being able to demonstrate transformative learning, my results supported participants actions that were transferrable relative to developed skills being used in the current workforce, however, not necessarily transformative for the individual. They developed communication skills, critical thinking, and understood the value of teamwork. These attributes helped them further by developing self-confidence and a desire to be successful in the workforce. This development of transferrable skills made them better skilled individuals but I cannot confirm that actual transformative learning actually took place; much more research would be necessary to determine if in fact, this development of skills and the experiences he/she encountered led to any transformation of the individual. Moreover, in depth, exploration into the experiences, critical reflection of those learned experiences, and transformations are necessary to support the manifestation of transformative learning.

Yet, these findings indicated that transferrable soft skills were developed from student employment including (but not limited to) developing confidence, communication skills, learning the value of teamwork and maintaining relationships, and complex thinking. The data also indicated a positive reaction on how campus recreation employment influenced the behaviors that they utilize today in their respective careers.

The results gave rise to the idea that leadership development is also contextual, thus, developing leadership and leadership skills are influenced by such context. Context includes the tangible and intangible factors such as the institution's expectations, mission, and organization structures (Osteen & Coburn, 2012). Student employment, particularly in campus recreation, offers several experiences that influence context. This includes their views on dealing with the diverse college population, working in effective teams, and implementing rules and guidelines to carry out a planned activity or event. Lederman (2009) suggested that a major component in fostering student achievement and success is to create meaningful work experiences. Such meaningful work experiences can be found in campus recreation student employment. Komives et al. (2013) explain that one's personal context including the different events, experiences, values, and beliefs that shapes a person, contribute to one's better understanding of the self and his or her development. Student employment in campus recreation has played an integral part in shaping the views, insights, and skills of the participants in this study.

In order to understand student development through the student employment experience, it is important to determine how college students describe or perceive their learning experiences as a student employee (McFadden & Carr, 2015). McFadden and Carr (2015) also indicated that student employees looked at three different conditions that fostered learning. Learning was promoted through: (1) dialogue with peers, student supervisors and professional staff; (2) skill development that included people skills, transferrable skills, and workplace skills; and (3) the workplace environment. The results from this study support the three conditions where learning was developed or enhanced and an overwhelming positive perception on the development of transferrable skills, the value of campus recreation student employment, and growth of leadership behaviors.

Having a positive reflection on the student employment experience, identifying what transferrable skills were developed, finding value in campus recreation student employment, and having a positive reflection on leadership development were the four main themes that rose from the study. Along with these themes and their respective sub-themes, the information collected indicated that the vast majority of the participants in the research valued the campus recreation student employment experience. These themes connect holistically in the study because for most of the participants, the working environment, views on one's leadership, and the opportunities to generate transferrable soft skills signify a positive relationship between the research participants and their involvement in campus recreation student employment. Still, a few did not share the same positive relationship. For these outliers, their experiences may have been less significant because these experiences may have not been as meaningful or may have not learn anything from them. There is also the possibility, as some participants interviewed noted, that for some, being employed in campus recreation "just saw it as a paycheck" or "not in the right position" or simply "not aware" of the opportunities to grow and develop. There is nothing wrong with these sentiments because each individual will experience certain opportunities and reflect on them differently. For most of the research participants, they saw these experiences differently because it was more than just a job or they took the initiatives to find value in the student work they conducted.

This research presents a single-sided view of former student employees of campus recreation. The survey responses offered a general consensus on the thoughts and feelings the identified participants had with regards to student employment in campus recreation. The analysis of the five individual narratives offers poignant views of the direct experiences these

participants have had in their overall thoughts about the value of campus recreation employment, skill development and how these skills are transferred into their current workplace.

While it may be unfair to generalize these thoughts as the overall reflection of campus recreation student employment, it is important to note that those that participated in this research had a positive experience with the program. The data collected show significant value of why working in campus recreation was beneficial to those that participated in the study. The use of transferrable skills, views on leadership, and their student development factored into their success in their current work settings. Nevertheless, there is more to the story of student employment in campus recreation and a much more balanced approach is needed to fully understand the overall impact. Endeavors to understand the impact of student employment on former recreation employees must also be sensitive to the fact that the participants of the study worked in different capacities and may have experienced things differently. Thus, the influence of student employment in campus recreation will vary by context resulting in the generation of varying and different viewpoints.

Nonetheless, the study offered a snapshot on a selective sampling of former student employees who worked for the campus recreation program at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. The data analysis has provided additional literature to the research of student employment and student employment in campus recreation. By focusing on one specific population, the former student employee, the study has provided another view supporting the value of campus recreation, campus recreation student employment, and leadership development.

Chapter V – Summary, Future Recommendations, and Conclusion

Summary

With the growing changes in the landscape of higher education, leaders for co-curricular programs, including campus recreation, need to re-evaluate the programs they offer, training modules and its value to the student experience (Cramp et al., 2014). A rise in on-campus work has also created new challenges for administrators and educators in higher education (McFadden & Carr, 2015). Administrative leaders are especially tasked to provide meaningful experiences for their student workers. It is imperative for higher education institutions to provide opportunities for students and student workers that create valuable experiences and competencies so that these students are more prepared and become more successful once they leave college and enter the workforce. Preparing graduates with work readiness has been a major element in the mission of higher education institutions (Daniels & Brooker, 2014). Part of their education and workforce development involves skills that may have already been learned or acquired such as personal interaction with others, communication, and work initiative, also referred to as soft skills. This study was intended to add to the growing literature of student employment, specifically through campus recreation. Focusing on the former student worker, the results of the study would examine what value the student employment experience in campus recreation has had in the development and utilization of transferrable leadership skills.

Specific research questions to be addressed:

(1) What transferrable skills were learned or developed through the campus recreation student employment experience? The results of the study indicated through student employment in campus recreation, individuals were able to develop or enhance their self-confidence,

communication, complex-thinking, and the ability to work in teams. These learned skills are currently being used in the workforce.

(2) *What was the impact of being a student employee in campus recreation?* The majority of the participants who took part in the online survey and all of the participants interviewed showed a positive regard for their campus recreation employment. In addition to the transferrable skills (soft skills) learned, campus recreation student employment offered opportunities to develop intangibles such as a better understanding of themselves and maintaining positive relationships and long-lasting friendships.

The responses to the research questions signify the beneficial role campus recreation student employment has in student and leadership development.

Future Recommendations

Leadership development and the acquirement of transferrable skills do occur in the campus recreation student employment setting. However, with limitations impeding the study, it is unfair to generalize the results to reflect the total picture of the student employment experience in campus recreation as being mainly positive. Still, the outcomes of this research provided a meaningful narrative of the impact student employment in campus recreation has had in former employees' current workplace settings. Being employed in campus recreation has fostered the development of transferrable leadership skills including teamwork, communication, problem solving and critical thinking, attributes that are being used today.

There are a number of considerations that can be made to further enhance this area of study. With additional time and resources, conducting future studies to focus on current student employees can lead to more insight on the influences of campus recreation employment. What worked before does not always mean it works today. Understanding the different experiences in

current workers when compared to former employees can be beneficial in the role campus recreation has with student employment. This could lead to the development of evaluations for both the students employed and the overall program. If a primary mission of campus recreation is to develop its student employees, it is important to design and implement evaluations that would enhance the unit as well as gauge the level of learning and development of the student employee. Tingle et al. (2013) stated that by designing curricula with sound theoretical foundations, recreation sports professionals have the ability to create and implement meaningful leadership development programs. These programs and knowing what works can lead to positive growth for the unit and the individual.

Future research can also include assessing the campus recreation professional's role in student development. As leaders in campus recreation, we need to see ourselves as leaders who do not yield to the misconceptions of leadership as a command and control process (Weese, 2010). Leaders are more about guidance and mentoring and less about authority and control. When professionals view themselves as mentors, they become committed leaders who relate well to the less-experienced employee and provide them with support to remove organizational barriers while affording them the opportunity to grow, professionally and personally (Bower, Hums, & Keedy, 2005).

Finally, by using the theoretical framework of transformative learning, there could be opportunities for future research to study the correlation between campus recreation student employment with student development and transformative learning. Student development is a conceptual and theoretical foundation used to understand and work alongside college students (Walker, 2008) to bring about change, growth, and development. The student development philosophy believes in the fact that student engagement impacts the growth and enhancement of

the total person which guides the daily activities and routines of campus recreation professionals (Tingle et al., 2013). In transformative learning, individuals are challenged to evaluate their value systems and worldviews and are changed or transformed by these experiences afterward (Mezirow, 2009). Transformative learning also attempts to offer a model that enables individuals to understand how adults learn in different settings.

Conclusion

In summary, the initial intent of this study was to define the development of transferrable skills to the workforce and bring value to the student employment experience, specifically employment in campus recreation. The data did support that development of transferrable skills, while the one-to-one interviews provided personal reflections on the impact campus recreation employment has had in their professional lives. While these reflections offered valuable insight and personal development, further research is necessary to justify if these experiences led to transformative learning, the theoretical lens used to guide the study. Exploration into the experiences, critical reflection of those learned experiences, and transformations are necessary to support such transformative learning.

Future research can further substantiate that learning continues to occur through developmental settings such as student employment in campus recreation and thus, justifying the need and value of campus employment in higher education institutions. The hope of this study is that the data gathered will contribute to the growing literature on student employment particularly in campus recreation.

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Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter



UNIVERSITY
of HAWAII®
MĀNOA

Office of Research Compliance
Human Studies Program

March 2, 2016

TO: Gari-Vic Baxa
Nathan Murata, Ph.D.
Principal Investigators
College of Education

FROM: Denise A. Lin-DeShetler, MPH, MA
Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Denise A. Lin-DeShetler".

SUBJECT: CHS #23772 - "Putting Skills into Practice: The Relationship Between Leadership Development from the Student Employment Experience and Post-College Profession"

This letter is your record of the Human Studies Program approval of this study as exempt.

On March 2, 2016, the University of Hawai'i (UH) Human Studies Program approved this study as exempt from federal regulations pertaining to the protection of human research participants. The authority for the exemption applicable to your study is documented in the Code of Federal Regulations at 45 CFR 46.101(b) (Category 2).

Exempt studies are subject to the ethical principles articulated in The Belmont Report, found at <http://www.hawaii.edu/irb/html/manual/appendices/A/belmont.html>

Exempt studies do not require regular continuing review by the Human Studies Program. However, if you propose to modify your study, you must receive approval from the Human Studies Program prior to implementing any changes. You can submit your proposed changes via email at uhirb@hawaii.edu. (The subject line should read: Exempt Study Modification.) The Human Studies Program may review the exempt status at that time and request an application for approval as non-exempt research.

In order to protect the confidentiality of research participants, we encourage you to destroy private information which can be linked to the identities of individuals as soon as it is reasonable to do so. Signed consent forms, as applicable to your study, should be maintained for at least the duration of your project.

This approval does not expire. However, please notify the Human Studies Program when your study is complete. Upon notification, we will close our files pertaining to your study.

If you have any questions relating to the protection of human research participants, please contact the Human Studies Program at 956-5007 or uhirb@hawaii.edu. We wish you success in carrying out your research project.

1960 East-West Road
Biomedical Sciences Building B104
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822
Telephone: (808) 956-5007
Fax: (808) 956-8683

An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution

Appendix B: Recruitment Letter

The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa is conducting a study:

***Putting skills into practice:
The Relationship Between Leadership Development From the
Student Employment Experience
and Post-college Profession***

Have you worked as a student employee in Student Recreation Services, here at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa?

If the answer is **YES...**

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study.

The purpose of this study aimed at identifying the relationship, if any, between student employment experience within Student Recreation Services and leadership development that is being used as professionals in the community after college. The research focuses on former employees' perspectives on their development of leadership skills through their student employment in relation to their professional careers.

- Participants will take part in a series of surveys and focus groups.
- Randomly selected participants (5-6) will take part in individual interviews.
- Study volunteers will be compensated for their time.
- A summary of the results of the research will be available to participants of the study.

To learn more about this research study,

Please call Gari Baxa at (808) 956-3819 or email at gari@hawaii.edu

Appendix C: Online Research Participation Consent Form

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Consent to Online Participation in Research Study:

Putting skills into practice:

The Relationship Between Leadership Development From the Student Employment Experience and Post-college Profession

My name is Gari Baxa, a doctoral student with the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM), in the College of Education. I am conducting a research project aimed at identifying the relationship, if any, between student employment experience within Student Recreation Services and leadership development that is being used as professionals in the community after college. The research focuses on former employees' perspectives on their development of leadership skills through their student employment in relation to their professional careers. I would like to interview you on this topic. Your participation is entirely voluntary and anonymity will be secured subject to the conditions described in this document.

Project Description: Your participation will involve a combination of an on-line survey and in-person interviews. The initial online survey will take approximately thirty (30) minutes. In-person interviews will take about one (1) hour. The total time required by your participation would be approximately 1½ hours, during the scope of the entire research.

Survey questions will include demographic information to determine general history such as number of years employed within Student Recreation, whether you took a leadership development class, and number of years working in your prospective post-college fields. Other questions will relate specifically to your experiences in Student Recreation employment. Five (5) to six (6) participants will be randomly selected to do interviews for further analysis. If you are selected, these one-to-one interviews will be conducted using open-ended questions to include the thoughts about your current assessment of leadership skills, to include advantages, disadvantages, lessons learned as well as offer an opportunity to share any other viewpoints on your leadership development through the student employment experience and how, if at all, these skills are currently being used in your practice.

As the researcher, I will collect and compile information from the focus group sessions and interviews through field notes, and the use of a digital audio-recorder. Once collected, I will transcribe the recordings, analyze all the information, and compose a final analysis of this study that will be submitted to the College of Education at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) to fulfill my Educational Doctorate in Professional Practice requirement in research. No other uses for the data will go beyond this project. The data collected during this study will be held in a

secure file, stored in a personal safe that I, alone will have access to, and then destroyed after three (3) years of completion of the research.

Benefits and Risks: There will be no direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. The results of the research may serve towards the development of a “measuring stick” for student employment. This may be used to understand the different perspectives that students may have in developing useful leadership skills learned through employment in Student Recreation Services. There is no anticipated risk to you in participating in this project. If, however, you are uncomfortable by any level of participation, you can decide to skip the question, take a break, stop the interview or withdraw from participating in the study at any time by notifying Gari Baxa at 808-956-3819 (work) or by email at gari@hawaii.edu. Please reference ***“Leadership Development from the Student Employment Experience”*** in your correspondence.

Confidentiality and Privacy: All data collected during the surveys and individual interviews will be kept in a secured filing cabinet. The only people with access to this data that identifies an individual or a school will be my University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM) advisor and myself. Data will be presented so that no individual identities are identifiable. Please note that the University of Hawaii Human Studies Program has the right to review our research records.

Once the final research project is submitted, all recordings will be deleted. The final reports will not specify your name, personally identifying information, the name of your position, or information that will identify you specifically. I will provide you a copy of the final report at your request.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You can choose freely to participate or not to participate. In addition, at any point during this project, you can withdraw your permission without any penalty or loss of benefits.

Questions: If you have any questions about this project, please let me know. You may email me at gari@hawaii.edu or call me at 808-956-3819 (please reference “student employment research project” in your correspondence”. You can also contact my advisor, Dr. Nathan Murata, at nmurata@hawaii.edu regarding this research study. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in this project, you can contact the University of Hawaii, Human Studies Program, by phone at (808) 956-5007 or by email at uhirb@hawaii.edu.

(Please keep the prior portion of this consent form for your records)

Section I: Participation

Please check below regarding your participation in this study.

- ☐ Yes, I agree to participate in this on-line survey
- ☐ No, I do not wish to participate in this study (STOP HERE. NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUIRED)

Appendix D: Online Survey Questions

Online Survey Questions

(to be administered to approximately 40 participants via Survey Monkey)

1. Specify your gender:
 - ☐ Female
 - ☐ Male
 - ☐ Do not wish to specify
2. Identify your age-range:
 - ☐ 18-22
 - ☐ 23-25
 - ☐ 26-29
 - ☐ 30+
 - ☐ Do not wish to specify
3. For how long were you employed in Student Rec Services at the University of Hawai`i?
 - ☐ Less than one (1) year
 - ☐ One (1) year
 - ☐ Two (2) years
 - ☐ Three (3) years
 - ☐ Four (4) or more years
4. What job title did you hold as a student employee for Student Rec Services?
 - ☐ Service Associate
 - ☐ Scorekeeper/Official
 - ☐ Lifeguard
 - ☐ Manager
 - ☐ Graduate Assistant
5. Did you take any leadership course(s) while at the University of Hawai`i? If so, what was the course called?
 - ☐ Yes _____
 - ☐ No
6. Did you graduate from the University of Hawai`i?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
7. Are you working at a full-time (8 hours/day) job?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No

8. If yes to question #5, specify the field that you are currently working in and in what capacity.
 - ☐ Administration: _____
 - ☐ Business: _____
 - ☐ Education: _____
 - ☐ Service: _____
 - ☐ Other: _____
9. Do you think you developed any leadership skills during your time as a student-employee at Student Recreation Services?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
10. Do you think you use those leadership skills in your current profession?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No

On a Likert Scale measuring your responses, please answer the following:

1. I acquired personal transferrable skills from my student employment experience.

5 – Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Neutral 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree
2. Working in Student Recreation has helped increase my confidence.

5 – Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Neutral 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree
3. Working in Student Recreation has helped developed my communication skills.

5 – Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Neutral 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree
4. Working in Student Recreation contributed to a positive experience in college life.

5 – Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Neutral 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree
5. I have a stronger sense of identity (who I am) because of my Student Recreation employment experience.

5 – Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Neutral 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree

6. I believe that my student employment experience has helped me develop into a better leader.

5 – Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Neutral 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree

7. I believe that my student employee experience has had a positive impact on the way/manner I work in my current position.

5 – Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Neutral 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree

8. I currently utilize the skills that I have learned from my student employment experience in my full-time job.

5 – Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Neutral 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree

9. I feel like I am able to handle/manage challenging situations in my full-time job because of the skills developed during my time as a student employee.

5 – Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Neutral 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree

10. I believe the skills I learned as a student employee has contributed to my success after college.

5 – Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Neutral 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree

Appendix E: Interview Research Participant Consent Form

University of Hawaii

Consent to Participate in Interview for Research Study:

Putting skills into practice:

The Relationship Between Leadership Development From the Student Employment Experience and Post-college Profession

My name is Gari Baxa, a doctoral student with the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM), in the College of Education. I am conducting a research project aimed at identifying the relationship, if any, between student employment experience within Student Recreation Services and leadership development that is being used as professionals in the community after college. The research focuses on former employees' perspectives on their development of leadership skills through their student employment in relation to their professional careers. I would like to interview you on this topic. Your participation is entirely voluntary and anonymity will be secured subject to the conditions described in this document.

Project Description: Your participation will involve a combination of an on-line survey and in-person interviews. The initial online survey will take approximately thirty (30) minutes. In-person interviews will take about one (1) hour. The total time required by your participation would be approximately 1½ hours, during the scope of the entire research.

Survey questions will include demographic information to determine general history such as number of years employed within Student Recreation, whether you took a leadership development class, and number of years working in your prospective post-college fields. Other questions will relate specifically to your experiences in Student Recreation employment. Five (5) to six (6) participants will be randomly selected to do interviews for further analysis. If you are selected, these one-to-one interviews will be conducted using open-ended questions to include the thoughts about your current assessment of leadership skills, to include advantages, disadvantages, lessons learned as well as offer an opportunity to share any other viewpoints on your leadership development through the student employment experience and how, if at all, these skills are currently being used in your practice.

As the researcher, I will collect and compile information from the focus group sessions and interviews through field notes, and the use of a digital audio-recorder. Once collected, I will transcribe the recordings, analyze all the information, and compose a final analysis of this study that will be submitted to the College of Education at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) to fulfill my Educational Doctorate in Professional Practice requirement in research. No other uses for the data will go beyond this project. The data collected during this study will be held in a

secure file, stored in a personal safe that I, alone will have access to, and then destroyed after three (3) years of completion of the research.

Benefits and Risks: There will be no direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. The results of the research may serve towards the development of a “measuring stick” for student employment. This may be used to understand the different perspectives that students may have in developing useful leadership skills learned through employment in Student Recreation Services. There is no anticipated risk to you in participating in this project. If, however, you are uncomfortable by any level of participation, you can decide to skip the question, take a break, stop the interview or withdraw from participating in the study at any time by notifying Gari Baxa at 808-956-3819 (work) or by email at gari@hawaii.edu. Please reference ***“Leadership Development from the Student Employment Experience”*** in your correspondence.

Confidentiality and Privacy: All data collected during the surveys and individual interviews will be kept in a secured filing cabinet. The only people with access to this data that identifies an individual or a school will be my University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM) advisor and myself. Data will be presented so that no individual identities are identifiable. Please note that the University of Hawaii Human Studies Program has the right to review our research records.

Once the final research project is submitted, all recordings will be deleted. The final reports will not specify your name, personally identifying information, the name of your position, or information that will identify you specifically. I will provide you a copy of the final report at your request.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You can choose freely to participate or not to participate. In addition, at any point during this project, you can withdraw your permission without any penalty or loss of benefits.

Questions: If you have any questions about this project, please let me know. You may email me at gari@hawaii.edu or call me at 808-956-3819 (please reference “student employment research project” in your correspondence”. You can also contact my advisor, Dr. Nathan Murata, at nmurata@hawaii.edu regarding this research study. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in this project, you can contact the University of Hawaii, Human Studies Program, by phone at (808) 956-5007 or by email at uhirb@hawaii.edu.

(Please keep the prior portion of this consent form for your records)

Section I: Participation

Please check below regarding your participation in this study.

_____ Yes, I agree to participate in this study (Please complete Section II)

_____ No, I do not wish to participate in this study (STOP HERE. NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUIRED)

Section II: Signature(s) for Consent:

I agree to participate in the research study on leadership development through the student recreation employment experience.

I understand that I can change my mind about participating in this project, at any time, by notifying the researcher(s).

I understand that interviews will be recorded with an audio device.
(Initial one below:)

_____ Yes, I agree to be audio recorded.

_____ No, I do not agree to be audio recorded.

Your Name (Print): _____

Your Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F: Research/Interview Questions

Individual Interview Questions

(to be administered in person to 5-6 randomly selected participants participating in the on-line survey)

1. Describe your working capacity as a student employee for Student Recreation Services (SRS).
2. What are your thoughts about how leadership skills were, if at all, developed through your student employment experience?
3. Describe the leadership skills you developed in your time at SRS.
4. Explain any leadership skills you developed through classroom instruction (i.e. taking a course like EDEA 360). If applicable, how are they similar? How are they different?
5. Why do you think these skills are important?
6. How do you utilize these skills in your current occupation?
7. What influences, if any, do you think working as a student employee in SRS has contributed to your success after college? Explain why or why not.
8. What current challenges do you see with regards to your continuing leadership development?
9. What suggestions/recommendations would you have with regards to further developing leadership skills through student employment?
10. Do you have any questions or other comments you would like to add?

Appendix F.1: Research/Interview Supplement Questions

Individual Interview Questions /With Supplementary Questions to challenge answers and perceived responses.

(to be administered in person to 5-6 randomly selected participants participating in the on-line survey)

11. Describe your working capacity as a student employee for Student Recreation Services (SRS).

- a. What specifically did you do? Explain.*
- b. How often did you work? How many hours per week?*
- c. How long did you work for the unit, from start to end of hire?*

12. What are your thoughts about how leadership skills were, if at all, developed through your student employment experience?

- a. What leadership skill or skills did you develop during your time as a student employee?*
- b. Of the participants surveyed, about 5% responded they did not develop any leadership skills during this time. What are your thoughts about this small percentage?*
- c. Did your experiences help you develop into a better leader? Explain. (Q20)*

13. Describe the leadership skills you developed in your time at SRS.

- a. According to the survey responses, confidence and communication were the skills, the participants developed during their work at SRS. Q14/Q15)*
- b. Describe five skills that you think you developed.*
- c. What one or two skills resonate with you the most? Explain.*
- d. On the other hand, about 27% neither agreed or disagreed that working at SRS developed complex thinking skills. Describe your development of complex thinking development through recreation employment. (Q16)*

14. Explain any leadership skills you developed through classroom instruction (i.e. taking a course like EDEA 360). If applicable, how are they similar? How are they different?

15. Why do you think these skills are important?

16. How do you utilize these skills in your current occupation?

- a. Approximately 95% surveyed felt that they acquired transferrable skills from their student employment experience. (Q13)*
- b. Did student employment have a positive or negative impact in your current work? (Q21)*
- c. Are you able to manage challenging situations because of the skills you developed? (Q23)*

17. What influences, if any, do you think working as a student employee in SRS has contributed to your success after college? Explain why or why not.
- a. Do you think working contributed to a positive experience in college? Why or why not? (Q17)*
 - b. Do you think working prepared you for life after college? Explain. (Q18)*
 - c. Were there any negative influences that may not have contributed to success? Explain. (Q18)*
18. What current challenges do you see with regards to your continuing leadership development?
- a. Having a stronger sense of identity (who I am) was mixed in the survey responses. How do you describe your sense of identity because of your SRS working experience? (Q19)*
19. What suggestions/recommendations would you have with regards to further developing leadership skills through student employment?
20. Do you have any questions or other comments you would like to add?